Tax increase voted to meet costs of Service; change in token rate avoided

A raise in fares has been deferred at least another year as AC Transit directors levied a tax increase to meet escalating costs of operating service.

Directors agreed on a levy averaging an increase of 3.2 cents after discussing alternates of a tax boost or a change in token rates paid by riders.

Reluctant to hike fares – and lose riders – they postponed the token change, and determined to seek other sources of financial aid to balance losses for next year.

Future Projections

At the same time, District executives were projecting equipment and financial needs over a several-year period, to aid in determining a realistic, cost-and-revenue long-range picture.

The tax boost balances a revised budget of $18,497,600.

The tax rate for Alameda County was set at 19.5 cents per $100 of assessed valuation. In Contra Costa County, the rate was 18.1 cents. The old rate in both counties was 16 cents.

The variation in rate results from changes in the assessment formula under the Knox-Petris Act of 1965.

Directors concluded an overall rate of 19.2 cents was necessary to meet estimated expenses, as well as to wipe the books clean of prior years’ deficits. The deficiency for this fiscal year was projected at $601,918. Accumulated from previous years was a deficit of $98,718.

The changes in property assessments, plus a boost in estimated revenue, enabled the directors to trim the budget—but not to the degree to meet costs which have jumped 7.5 percent in the past year alone. Most of the increase was attributed to labor expenses, up $1,008,300 or 8 percent above last year’s figures.

The labor bill, including fringe benefits, accounts for 73.5 percent of the total budget.

While approving a tax increase, directors stressed they were well aware of the burden already placed on property owners. But they agreed, after extensive discussion, their main job was to get more riders on buses.

Loss of riders

Studies disclosed a change in token rate could be expected to lose the District as many as 831,400 passengers during the year. Elimination of tokens entirely could result in loss of more than a million riders—over three percent of local patronage.

Directors also pointed out a fare increase would affect groups who could least afford it. Holding off a fare raise, the Board stepped up efforts to find other revenue sources.

Director Ray H. Rinehart, financial committee chairman, pointed out he hoped the State legislature would be able to assist in securing financial aid.
United Crusade off to a rolling start

A personal report on challenges met by United Bay Area Crusade gave AC Transit campaigners a "lift-off" this month toward wholehearted District participation in the 1967 drive.

Mrs. Linda Porter, of Berkeley Chapter, American Red Cross, spoke poignantly of her own experiences—and what funds received from the Crusade mean in this area.

She told of the coffee and doughnuts being served, in increasing quantities, at Oakland docks where servicemen are getting their last look at "home."

She admitted she couldn't put a price tag on aid—not when it included flying a wife to Japan to see her badly wounded husband just before he died.

Or, how much it was worth to discover how much each employee gave was an individual matter, but as campaigners they had a special job—to bring recognition to fellow workers of what the Crusade means and is trying to accomplish.


District workers appointed to new posts

Reclassification of three employees was approved by the Board of Directors this month in line with an administrative program to better utilize personnel for increased efficiency.

Changes included appointment of Mrs. Zada Malinak as customer services supervisor, with direction of the PBX-Information department and the Lost and Found office, in the Latham Square Building.

Miss Catherine Metzner, veteran in the treasurer-controller's department, was elevated from the post of senior clerk to that of chief clerk-payroll department.

John Ebbinga, worker in the same department, was assigned as computer-programmer operator, in preparation for utilization of a computer system.

CRUSADE WORKERS — On the job in getting AC Transit's United Crusade campaign off in high gear were, from the left, Alan L. Bingham, general manager; Mrs. Linda Porter, Red Cross speaker; and W. G. Skilling, chairman of District drive.

Passenger revenue and the total number of passengers carried showed a decrease during July, but transbay riding was up, continuing a general growth pattern.

Fare box revenue totaled $1,096,790, a decrease of $8,464 or .77 percent compared to passenger revenue of $1,105,254 collected in July a year ago. On East Bay lines, revenue was down 2.72 percent, while on transbay lines, riding was up 1.9 percent.

Commute book sales also were up, reaching $176,237, a 2.3 percent boost over year-ago sales of $172,332.

The number of passengers carried during the month totaled 3,922,774, a decrease of 80,835 or 2 percent below the passenger count of 4,003,609 tallied in July, 1966. Riding was down 1.6 percent on East Bay lines, but up 1.8 percent on transbay.

Operation costs during the month totaled $1,312,645, up $29,007 or 2.26 percent compared to costs of $1,283,638 in July of the previous year. The District operated 1,854,062 miles of service, an increase of 28,628 miles.

Total income of $1,502,945 was sufficient to cover operational costs, depreciation and bond debt requirements.

Sightseeing bus tour has happy ending

The District's first sightseeing tour ended with the Labor Day weekend on a note of appreciated response from the public. During a month of operation, sightseeing buses carried 612 passengers over a 38-mile scenic routing. The buses made 37 trips, averaging 16.8 riders per tour. As a result of the response, the District is planning to resume the tour next summer.
The Richmond Division marked its 20th anniversary as a bus division this month and in appropriate fashion—with a face-lifting.

It was on Sept. 1, 1947, that Division 3 opened with befitting ceremonies as the property where "assembly line technique and preventative maintenance can be seen at their best."

The yard now is undergoing its first remodeling since those "streamlined" days, following sale of a strip of land to Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

The work, which is to cost $78,880, includes relocation of locker room, washroom and office space; a new fuel island and moving of the wash rack and steam cleaner. Involved in the project was an excavation big enough for two 10,000-gallon diesel fuel tanks.

The property itself dates from early in the century, when it was purchased by East Shore and Suburban Railroad. The street car line, started in 1903, used the yard for its cars and as office for the superintendent.

It was a busy facility after the line was brought into the Key System family in 1911. Richmond was linked with Oakland by a street car line on San Pablo Ave. Local trolley lines also operated within the Richmond city limits.

But gasoline buses were to prove their versatility. In 1933, the last street car ran between Berkeley and Richmond, as that section was motorized.

For a time, the yard was used as a "boneyard" for obsolete equipment. After the car barn was razed in 1934, the old street cars were hauled back to Yerba Buena yard for scrapping. The land was empty until Key System Transit Lines transformed it into a bus facility.

As part of the opening ceremonies, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce held a luncheon on the gilly room and city officials toured the property. According to news reports of the day, they were highly impressed with the "inventive genius of man" in developing a "motor coach headquarters that really can be called beautiful."

District veterans take retirement,
Ending years in area transportation

After 31 years as a bus driver — the last 20 years for Key System and AC Transit, M. F. Sylvia, Sr., will take off around Oct. 1 for the kind of a holiday transit men dream about.

Sylvia plans to spend two years traveling around the United States, enjoying himself and the knowledge "you can't take it with you." Currently, he is living at 2181 East 14th St., San Leandro.

A former bus driver in New England, Sylvia, 58, came here on a vacation and liked it so much he stayed, joining Key System in August, 1947. A son, Manuel Sylvia, Jr., drives on Line 40.

Others who have retired from Seminary Division include J. F. Green, 65, 25 Warfield Terrace, Orinda, who started to work as a trainman in May, 1944, and switched to bus driving in 1958.

Off to Texas is H. L. Brown, 62, 2232 Rosedale Ave., Oakland, who started on the trains in 1945 and moved over to bus driving at Seminary in 1948.

George Toniatti, 52, who had been on sick leave since July 24, 1966, received a disability retirement effective Aug. 1. Toniatti, who lives at 4031 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland, went to work in 1946 as a trainman, became an operator in 1948, switched back to trains for a brief period in 1950, returning to driving in October of that year.

Also taking a disability retirement was J. L. Warren, 1705 Pennsylvania Ave., Richmond, stores clerk at Emeryville Division. Warren started as a car wireman on Jan. 31, 1949 became a parts clerk a short time later and worked at both Richmond and Emeryville Divisions before suffering a heart attack.

END OF CAREER — M. F. Sylvia, Sr., receives retirement pin from R. M. Detloff, superintendent of Seminary Division. Sylvia intends to keep traveling — for fun.
The job we do

Public responsibility—from a bus

How do other people see us?
One of them, at least, sees us with new admiration and understanding.

After seven weeks as a member of AC Transit’s family, Marilyn Cole, Mills College senior, found District operations complex, responsible, dedicated and “really good.”

One of 10 girls chosen for a Mills College summer internship program, “Metropolitan Oakland: Explorations in Public Responsibility,” Miss Cole discovered a lot about bus riding and the cities of the East Bay. She ended up an enthused, knowledgable supporter and a confirmed bus passenger.

Miss Cole rode buses—lots of them—and talked with lots of drivers.

She spent time in each District department, learning something about each. She visited with the Carmen’s Union and got the viewpoint of officials from Division 192. She spent a week with the Bay Area Rapid Transit District, discovering something about their plans and problems.

Her contribution
She attended board meetings, studied District finances, helped plan the summertime sightseeing tour and worked on updating the booklet, “Sunshine Trails.”

In the process, she also discovered the East Bay, visiting many of the cities for the first time—and from the viewpoint of a bus rider.

These were her reactions:
“I’m surprised how aware you are of public service and responsibility. That goes all the way down to bus drivers. They honestly think about the public.

“I realize now they are AC Transit’s name with the public and I think they try to make a good impression. I was real impressed with the drivers. I found they liked their job. So many people ask questions. I never realized before people could be nasty to a bus driver.

“I was amazed how simple bus transportation looks from the outside and how complex it really is. So much more planning has to go into it than I realized.

“You’re doing a good job. You recognize your responsibility to the public much more than do some agencies.”

Miss Cole illustrated her new, keen interest in transportation on her last day, while “listening in” at Central Dispatch. She had noticed a grandstand in front of the City Hall and asked about the event—a downtown merchant promotion. Then she asked, like a “pro”:

“But what’s that going to do to our bus service? Will we be running late?”

AVID RIDER—Marilyn Cole, Mills College senior, became a solid AC Transit supporter after spending the summer on the property.
At an adjourned regular meeting Aug. 23, the Board of Directors:
• Commended purchases and stores department and safety engineer for outstanding safety record achieved by stores employees, on motion of Director Copeland.
• Set new tax rate of 19.5 cents per $100 of assessed valuation for Alameda County and 18.1 cents for Contra Costa County on motion of Director Rinehart. (See story, Pg. 1.)
• Appointed General Manager to Board of Control of Northern California Transit Demonstration Project, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
• Authorized Director Copeland to attend conference of American Society of Civil Engineers, on motion of Director Rinehart.

At a regular meeting Sept. 13, the Board of Directors:
• Authorized preparation of specifications and advertising for bids for diesel fuel and other petroleum products, on motion of Director Coburn.
• Approved personnel changes, creating positions of customer services supervisor, chief clerk – payroll department, and computer-programmer operator, on motion of Director Rinehart.
• Tabled recommendation concerning post of public information manager to meeting of Oct. 11, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
• Authorized staff members and directors to attend annual meeting of American Transit Assn., on motion of Director Coburn.

Traditional coffee launches new safety contest.

A new safety contest among operators, to drive a maximum number of miles without an accident, was launched at the three divisions this month with the traditional free coffee and doughnuts. The new goal to beat was set at 12,900 miles per accident.

The current records stand at 15,434 for Emeryville Division; 18,601 miles for Richmond; and 16,736 for operators at Seminary Division. The system's best average is 13,784 miles.