A new bus is born
Actions of the Board

At an adjourned regular meeting Dec. 23, the Board of Directors:
- Moved participation in project to test feasibility of operating buses powered by steam engines, on motion of Director Coburn. (See story, Pg. 5)
- Authorized General Manager to execute contract with U.S. Department of Transportation for capital grant relating to purchase of buses and radios, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Upon approval of federal grant, authorized exercising option to purchase 45 new coaches, on motion of Director Berk. (See story, Pg. 3)
- Declared six automobiles and two trucks surplus and authorized their disposes through standard procedures, on motion of Director Copeland.
- Adopted resolution confirming boundaries of AC Transit District for assessment purposes, on motion of Director Copeland.
- Elected William E. Berk as president, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Elected E. Guy Warren as vice president on motion of Director Copeland. (See story below)
- Continued “Ready Fare” plan on permanent basis, on motion of Director Coburn. (See story, Pg. 4)

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- Elected E. Guy Warren as vice president on motion of Director Copeland.
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NEW OFFICERS—William E. Berk, left, newly-elected president of the Board of Directors, and E. Guy Warren, vice-president, begin duties.

Officers elected to head transit board

William E. Berk was elected president of AC Transit's Board of Directors this month, taking over leadership at a time when challenges are expected to include rising costs, as well as transit changes and improvements.

Serving as vice-president will be E. Guy Warren.

Berk, Richmond business executive, has been a member of the board since Jan. 1961, serving on a platform of economy and better service for riders and taxpayers. He succeeds John McDonnell, nursery owner, who served as president for two years.

The new president, who represents West Contra Costa County, is a plumbing contractor, prominent in housing, building and contracting associations, as well as in civic and social groups. He is a director of Columbus Founders Savings and Loan Association. His home is at 450 Mount St., Richmond.

Warren, of 17031 Cull Canyon Rd., Hayward, was instrumental in formation of the District and passage of the bond issue which put it in business. He was appointed to the board in June, 1961, representing southern Alameda County.

Owner of Warren Transportation Co., he played an important part in bringing the State College to Hayward and is a trustee of California State Colleges.

The election divided representation between Contra Costa and Alameda counties and between the District's northern and southern boundaries.

IN PRODUCTION—Workmen join windshield assembly to roof.

The assignment will release 10 large modern coaches for use on the fast growing MacArthur Blvd. Line 57 and 20 buses for transbay service.

Twenty-five buses, manufactured in 1947 and with approximately 900,000 miles each, will be retired. Five will be held in reserve for use in growth areas.

The District plans to retire additional high mileage older buses, on a one-to-one ratio, with the August delivery.

With the aid of the grant, new radio units will be installed on 157 coaches, with three retained as “spares.” The system will have 457 buses linked by instant communications after the March delivery and 472 “on the air” in the fall.

Cost of the radio equipment, including an additional base station for a third channel, is estimated at $147,000.

District builds modern fleet with purchase Of new buses and additional radio units

Approval of a federal grant cleared the way this month for the District to purchase 45 new buses and equip its entire modern fleet with two-way radios.

With delivery, two-thirds of the fleet will be “new look” coaches. The property will have 693 buses on the line, 462 of them modern equipment.

Delivery of 30 coaches in March and another 15 in August will release additional modern equipment for East Bay and transbay commute service. It also will permit the first major retirement of older buses since the gasoline-powered models were sent to pasture in 1965.

Grant approved

Approval of a $589,025 capital grant by the U.S. Department of Transportation cleared the way for the “new year” equipment program, the most auspicious since the initial purchase of 250 new buses, delivered in 1960-61.

The grant covers half of project costs of $1,178,050, involved in purchase of 30 larger, 102-inch wide coaches and 160 radio units, with other equipment necessary to link the buses into the present communications system.

The grant can be increased by another $196,341, to a total of $785,366, if regional planning is considered completed within three years.

With the grant approved, the District moved ahead to order an additional 15 larger type buses for August delivery, taking advantage of an option held with General Motors.

The second order, at an estimated cost of $514,800, will make up the “slack” which occurred in 1968, when the District purchased only 15 buses, pending completion of projections on future operational requirements.

With the new orders, the District will have $13,718,061 invested in new equipment since it commenced operations in October, 1960.

The purchases will enable the District to keep pace with increases in patronage, according to Alan L. Bingham, general manager. The program also is in line with plans for coordinated service to be operated by AC Transit when BART trains begin to roll, Bingham added.

The 30 new buses will be assigned to Seminary Division, for operation on the high mileage 80 lines.

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Full steam ahead

District to test new power system

AC Transit can expect to have two buses powered by steam engines in operation before the end of the year, testing a “breakthrough” into smog-free, noiseless, more economical and more powerful public transportation.

The experimental steam bus project, proposed by the California State Assembly, would be the first of its kind.

Two steam engines will be placed in District buses and operated in normal service for nine months, on East Bay lines and across the bridge to San Francisco.

Two engines also will be installed on San Francisco Municipal Railway buses in San Francisco.

Government grant

The State Assembly applied for a $450,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to finance the project. It will be operated through a contract with a nonprofit research firm, which will provide administration and take public attitude surveys.

Technicians will determine specifications, call for bids from steam engine suppliers, and oversee installation. The year-long project will include three months of pre-testing and training and nine months of actual operation with regular passengers. Go-ahead for participation was given by the Board of Directors, on the basis of a noncash contribution of $75,000 in transit equipment, maintenance and personnel.

Project costs

Total project cost of $610,000 includes the government grant, identical noncash participation from the transit properties, and work-time contributions from the State Assembly and the State Air Resources Board.

Assemblyman John F. Foran, chairman of the Assembly Committee on Transportation and Commerce, said the advantages of steam engines have been well documented and DOT officials believe the propulsion system may provide noiseless, vibration-free, low-maintenance, powerful and clean urban mass transit.

The steam engine, considerably lighter and with less moving parts, would require less maintenance, Foran said. Fuel costs also would be lower, as steam engines use a low grade of fuel while obtaining more miles per gallon.

The experiment is in line with District efforts to explore new approaches to public transportation.

Cost of living benefit boosts wages

Wages for 1500 employees went up nine cents an hour starting Jan. 5, reflecting the District’s first cost of living adjustment.

The benefit increases labor costs for union and non-union workers by an estimated $152,420 during the first half of the calendar year. The initial increase, based on the change in the U.S. Consumer Price Index for 1968, brings the scale for bus drivers to $3.80 per hour.

Another cost of living adjustment will be made in six months and a third allowance will be computed with the first payroll in January, 1970, under terms of the three-year labor contract which went into effect in June, 1967.

"Ready Fare" plan to continue

The "Ready Fare" plan of riding has been extremely successful and will be continued permanently.

Directors agreed at a meeting this month to extend the "no cash on buses" program, since results have indicated no adverse affect on patronage as result of the change in fare collection procedure.

Some 200,000 passengers are boarding each day with exact change ready, with only an average of six riders requiring refund coupons because they do not have the right fare.

Credit for the success of the program has been given to some 400 financial and business firms for their cooperation in selling tokens to the public.

The District has had greater gains in riding and passenger revenue during the first five months of "Ready Fare" than during the same period in 1967.

Passenger revenue is up 2.97 percent for the five months, while riding has shown an increase of almost one percent.

The same ratio of children to adults—one third to two thirds—has been maintained. Less riders are using tokens, however, instead taking advantage of ticket books for discount traveling.

Token use down

In November, 1967, two thirds of adult East Bay riders used tokens. In November, 1968, half were using tokens.

The plan was inaugurated July 14 for a six-months experimental period following the shooting of bus driver R. P. Livingston during a holdup, as a means of deterring bus crimes.
Workers end long years of service

Retirement has been full of "action" for Frank "Joe" Bruni, 68, of 19031 Santa Maria Ave., Castro Valley, culminating in an accident which broke his foot. Bruni, who retired from building maintenance Jan. 1, reported he was "up a tree, cutting off a branch," when he accidentally kicked the ladder out from under his feet.

"I hung there for a while. I can jump like a rabbit, but there were some dogs under me, barking, and I didn't want to fall on them. I finally dropped on some cement and broke a bone in my right foot.

"I'm healing real fast, though."

Before then, Bruni was ill with the flu, then with a cold he caught after changing a tire in a snowstorm on his way to Las Vegas.

Ahead for Bruni and his wife is another trip to Europe, including Spain, Portugal, England and Scotland.

"Joe" went to work in 1942 as a mechanic at Central car barn in 1945 and later transferred to Seminary Division to work on buses.

Jimmie Lee, 65, of 859 43rd St., Oakland, retired Jan. 1 as a mechanic "B" after long years of work at Rich mond Division. He entered service in February, 1947, as a cleaner at Oakland yards.

Taking his pension Jan. 1 will be W. L. "Bill" Bailey, who has been on leave for the past two years, serving as maintenance agent and vice president of Amalgamated Transit Union, Division 192.

Bailey, of El Cerrito, went to work for Key System in 1946 as an automotive machinist in the unit room at Emeryville shops. Later he transferred to the unit room at Emeryville Division, where he worked until switching to union headquarters. A sports fan, he plans now to do some traveling and to sell a little real estate.

Holbrook, who is retiring March 1, went to work for East Bay Street Railway in 1935. He worked as a streetcar operator, bus driver and since 1949, in the dispatcher's office.

His own "road" includes trains and one electric trolley of memory.

J. W. "Pop" Edwards, 75, whose pension is effective Feb. 1, "boomed" around for years because "the grass always looked a little greener on the other side — until I got there." A mechanic "A," he went to work in the unit room in 1945. He plans now to take care of "a lot of yard" at his home, 1501 142nd Ave., San Leandro.

John F. Green, 58, who has been disabled with a heart ailment, was pensioned effective Dec. 1. A full-blooded Navajo Indian, he left the reservation in New Mexico as a youngster and never returned.

Green, of 1225 81st Ave., Oakland, went to work as a mechanic at Central car barn in 1945 and later transferred to Seminary Division to work on buses.

E. Bailey, of El Cerrito, went to work for Key System in 1946 as an automotive machinist in the unit room at Emeryville shops. Later he transferred to the unit room at Emeryville Division, where he worked until switching to union headquarters. A sports fan, he plans now to do some traveling and to sell a little real estate.

Business activity shows decrease

Fare box revenue and riding showed a decrease in November, although transbay travel held its own in income collected.

Passenger revenue for the month totaled $1,171,420, down $5,775 or .49 percent over year ago revenue of $1,177,195. Revenue on East Bay lines was $671,147, a decrease of 1.08 percent over the same month in 1967. Transbay income totaled $500,273, up .32 percent over November, a year ago. Commute book sales came to $204,797, a gain of six percent over year ago sales of $193,152.

The number of passengers carried totaled 4,304,312, down 3.09 percent over the riding count of 4,441,372 for November of 1967. Riding on East Bay lines showed a decrease of 3.46 percent, while transbay riding had a drop of 2.09 percent.

Operation costs in the month totaled $1,488,011, up $116,788 over year ago expenses of $1,371,223. The District operated 1,968,246 miles of service, an increase of 16,387 or .84 percent over mileage for November, 1967.

Total income of $1,627,381 covered operational costs and depreciation, but left a deficit of $38,495 in meeting full bond debt requirements.

The transit industry nationally indicated a riding decrease for the month of 4.68 percent.
Bus driver comes to Aid of police officer

Rescues are not new to bus driver Jack Yount, 38. He believes in helping other people and returning favors.

Driving on Line 72 at night, Yount has called on police several times for help with unruly passengers. When he saw a Richmond police officer drop in front of a stopped car early in the morning of Dec. 27, Yount braked to a stop, jumped from his coach and went to the policeman’s aid.

As a result, he received a personal letter of thanks from Robert B. Murphy, chief of police of Richmond.

"Seemingly, without regard for your own personal safety, you responded to an incident that did not go unnoticed by the Police Department," the letter said in part.

"It is good to know there are citizens who feel a responsibility toward their neighbor and—the policeman."

"... thank you for your alertness and help."

It was signed by the chief.

Yount, who thought the officer had been shot, found instead he was on the street, trying to handcuff one of two youths and recover what the officer said was dope.

When Yount asked if he could help, the policeman replied:

"Yes, watch the other one."

The driver guarded the second youth until another patrol car arrived to take both into custody.

As a citizen’s band radio operator, Yount previously rescued three fishermen off Rodeo after picking up their walkie-talkie call for help on his own station.

He also participated in a second boat rescue off Point Pinole, keeping his car headlights on a boat in trouble until the Coast Guard arrived.

"The police especially have paid off a lot of times, helping us out. I’m sure glad to do anything to help them," Yount commented.

A driver with AC Transit for the past two years, Yount lives at 166 Napa Ave., Rodeo.

With a radio on his bus, in his car and at his home, he’s also the man "on the spot" at accidents. He carries a supply of flares, a first aid kit and does "anything I can to help out."