New information phone
Aids downtown riders
What the Editors are saying about transit

Tribune Editorial Page

Necessary as it is, the new 9.9 cent property tax rate increase by the AC Transit District is sure to provoke protests from those property taxpayers who argue that they personally do not use the buses they are supporting.

There is little room to dispute the transit district's need for extra money in the new fiscal year. The terms of the settlement of the 19-day drivers' strike this past June will cost an estimated $1 million in additional wages. A decline in passenger usage then, is expected to cost the district an extra million, based on the 1969/70 consolidated tax rate of 19.2 cents. Directors were left with but two choices to make up the deficit: raise fares or raise property taxes.

Adult fares had already been raised two years ago—an adverse effect upon passenger usage then. Another fare increase would likely have only resulted in yet another decline in passenger revenue and, ultimately, a still greater deficit for the property taxpayer to make up.

Directors instead elected to impose the first increase in the property tax rate in three years. Property taxpayers living in the Alameda and Contra Costa county areas served by AC Transit but who do not happen to use the bus system may understandably resist paying higher taxes for a service they seemingly derive no benefit from.

The essential point is that an efficient system of public transportation benefits all persons in the community, whether or not they use the system per se.

It is, for instance, estimated that every full bus represents 40 to 45 automobiles the bus riders would otherwise be driving or riding in.

These same autos—were there no public transportation alternative—would probably hopelessly clog the streets, freeways and downtown parking spaces now used by the commuter or shopper who chooses to drive or ride in private cars rather than ride in AC Transit's buses.

And, those same private automobiles which are not running because their owners are riding the bus would also obviously contribute heavily to the pollution of the air shared by all of us—bus riders, property taxpayers and private automobile commuters alike.

Another benefit often overlooked is that the existence of a sound public transportation system is a continuing shot in the arm to the prosperity of any community. It would probably be impossible to estimate just how much in off-setting tax money is paid by business and industry in the Eastbay simply because the community offers such advantages as a modern transportation network.

Certainly, the public commuter should be expected to pay the larger share of the costs of his public transportation system. Thus it is in AC Transit—with cashbox fares accounting for approximately two-thirds of district revenues and property taxes approximately one-third. But, a degree of subsidy by all taxpayers is both necessary and justifiable.

The AC Transit District, now carrying more than 52 million passengers a year in the Eastbay, is of major benefit to the entire community and similarly merits the support of the entire community in its new tax rate increase.

Taxes increased to balance budget

AC Transit will operate under a total budget of $23,701,710 for the current fiscal year, continuing with a program of meeting neighborhood transportation needs despite costs which have escalated more than 14 percent in one year.

The operating estimate, adopted by the Board of Directors, tops expenditures of the past year by $2,941,672. The 1969/70 experience is distorted, however, because of the recent 19-day strike.

Directors reluctantly raised property taxes as the "only way" to pay for increased labor costs and a drop in ridership. The Board set the new consolidated tax rate at 29.1 cents per $100 of assessed valuation, a boost of 9.9 cents from last year.

It was the first tax rate increase in three years for AC Transit tax payers. Because of a difference in assessment ratios, the tax is 28.8 cents in Alameda County and 30.6 in Contra Costa.

Board action came after Alan L. Bingham, general manager, told directors his estimate showed a net deficit of $2,451,029, based on the 1969/70 consolidated rate of 19.2 cents. An increase was needed to balance the budget, he said.

The deficit was attributed primarily to increased labor costs under an interim wage agreement with the Amalgamated Transit Union and a reduction in revenue due to the recent strike.
New safety goal doesn’t last long

Operators in all three AC Transit operating divisions have, once again, proven the truth of an old saying in the sports world that “Records are made to be broken.”

After consistently breaking the old goal of 13,100 miles per accident, the goal was raised on July 1 to 13,250 safe driving miles per accident. So what happened in July? All three divisions exceeded the new goal—with Richmond reaching a whopping 18,205 miles per accident.

Veteran transit men taken by death

Death has taken three veteran transit men who worked in the era of streetcars and transbay trains.

The oldest, John C. Hansen, 90, of 1861 E. 14th St., San Leandro, started work on Nov. 1, 1919, and was pensioned Dec. 1, 1945. An equipment operator, he died May 24.

William S. Dyer, 85, who died July 19, was a trainman who entered service April 8, 1918. His retirement began Dec. 1, 1949.

Joseph L. Furtado, 77, who went to work on Oct. 30, 1919, two days before Hansen, was pensioned in July, 1958, as a mechanic. He died July 1.

Larry Slate Cited—AC Transit driver Larry Slate, right, receives his community service citation from General Manager Alan L. Bingham.

Larry Slate Of Richmond Saves 3 lives

A community service citation has been awarded operator Larry E. Slate, 29, whose heroic action is credited with helping save the lives of a family of three.

The citation was presented to Slate by Alan L. Bingham, general manager, at this month’s meeting of the Board of Directors. The certificate recognizes Slate’s “outstanding contribution to the betterment of his community and the well-being of his fellow citizens.”

Slate, driving an “Owl” Line 72 run in Richmond, noticed smoke pouring between two houses on a side street. He radioed to central dispatch, wheeled up across from the house, confirmed by radio it was a fire, then ran to the door to notify occupants.

As he was breaking down the front door, a police officer came to his aid and together they crawled along the floor into the smoke-filled house in an attempt to reach a person they could hear coughing.

“We knew there was somebody alive in there, but we couldn’t get to them,” Slate said.

The two men grabbed a garden hose and played water on burning walls; however, they were not able to force their way through the intense smoke and flames.

Firemen, arriving seconds later, managed to fight their way inside and rescue 52-year-old Lawrence Henry, his wife, Berthie, 32, and the couple’s infant son, Larry.

All three were unconscious and suffered burns but have since been released from a Martinez hospital. They are expected to recover from their injuries.

Slate, who has been driving a year, had previous training in rescue work as a member of the Contra Costa County Sheriff’s Department Search and Rescue Team.

He lives at 1262 Azevedo St., Antioch, and works out of Richmond Division.

Modernistic phone booth Installed on Broadway

Shoppers and other transit riders in the downtown Oakland area now can use a modernistic, new phone booth to call for information about AC Transit routes and schedules.

The booth is on Broadway near 13th. Featured on this month’s cover of Transit Times, the seven foot high booth adds to the appearance of Oakland’s main shopping artery and is in keeping with the city’s efforts to modernize the street.

The young lady using the phone is 21-year-old Marlaine Gardner.
Sightseeing tour finishes fourth year

AC Transit closed out the fourth year of its summer-long "Sightseeing Tour" on Labor Day, calling the special scenic tour a success once again.

A total of 1,402 passengers rode the bus during its three month "season," viewing East Bay sights such as Alameda's "Gold Coast," the Oakland Coliseum Complex, Mills College, the Mormon Temple, spacious Piedmont estates and the University of California's famed Sather Gate area.

This year's total topped last year's total of 1,299 by just over 100 passengers and far exceeded the first year total of 612.

The ten-week run, consisting of one bus a day, Tuesday through Sunday, carried an average of 23 passengers on each trip.

Counted among this year's riders were long-time residents of the East Bay who took the tour, according to one tour customer, "to see things I always knew were here, but had never seen." Another rider, a woman from Southern California whose husband is being transferred to a job in Oakland, said she "couldn't think of a better way to go house-hunting."

Nor was the passenger list restricted to adults. Counted among the passenger total this year were 212 children.

The tour left every day except Monday at 1 p.m. from Jack London Square. After a 2½ to three-hour tour through Oakland, Alameda, Piedmont and Berkeley, the tour bus returned to the square.

Passengers had the choice of taking another bus home or staying to enjoy some of the fine dinners offered by the many restaurants near the Oakland waterfront.

United Crusade
Drive kicks off

AC Transit's participation in the 1970 United Bay Area Crusade was launched this month with a "Kick-off" dinner in Berkeley under the chairmanship of William G. Skilling, AC Transit's assistant treasurer.

"The District's employees always have responded generously in the past," Skilling said, "but this year, we're shooting for 100 percent participation."

Skilling said the UBAC "fair share" goal is one hour's pay per month.
Actions of the Board

At an adjourned regular meeting Aug. 26, the Board of Directors:
• Authorized the General Manager to serve on newly formed American Transit Association Bus Design Research Committee, on motion of Director McDonnell.
• Authorized Board and management attendance at American Transit Association annual meeting, on motion of Director Rinehart.
• Adopted revised 1970/71 Operating Estimate, on motion of Director Rinehart.
• Adopted a new, consolidated property tax rate of 29.1 cents per $100 of assessed valuation, on motion of Director Rinehart.

At a regular meeting Sept. 10, the Board of Directors:
• Adopted a resolution in support of State Proposition 18 on the November ballot and urged voters to approve the measure, on motion of Director Bettenhaus.

Nation-wide operator testing study launched

AC Transit and four other transit agencies across the United States will join with the federal government in an industry-wide project to improve training of transit operators.

The immediate goal of the project is to find new and better ways of recruiting and testing prospective bus drivers.

Commenting on tests currently being used by the nation’s transit agencies, Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe described them as “general intelligence tests, tests developed for truck drivers and a 30-year-old test developed for transit operators.” Volpe added: “No one really knows whether the tests are any good.” He also said the tests have been criticized.

However, Volpe emphasized that the project expects “to develop the best way of finding the best-qualified people to operate our transit systems.”