NEW BUS SERVICE BEGINS
FOR RESIDENTS OF
MORAGA AND ORINDA
I wish to add a commendation for Margaret Bellinger. Recently, I left my tennis racket on the Line E Express bus and despaired of ever recovering it — as such items have an unfortunate manner of disappearing when unattended.

Margaret Bellinger was the driver of the bus and apparently discovered the racket on her check after the completion of the run to San Francisco.

In any event, thanks to her diligence I was able to recover the racket and to avoid missing a tennis date.

Edward Chandler
San Francisco

* * *

I was a passenger on one of your transbay buses which was disabled on the Bay Bridge recently. I want to commend the action of the driver during this situation.

When the air pressure in his brakes was lost, he managed to safely cross five lanes of traffic and reach an off-the-road place to stop.

He warned the passengers to hold on in case there was a jerk when he used the emergency brake. As it turned out, the stop was uneventful.

I have always known your drivers were efficient and courteous and it is good to see they are also calm and reliable under emergency conditions.

Gerrie Christman
Oakland

* * *

I should like to comment upon the professional manner in which a lady driver handled herself on a bus I rode recently.

Turns were made smoothly and within the lanes proscribed and with no sudden jolting at stops. The bus was pulled in close enough to curbs so that one did not have to step down into the gutter in alighting or climb onto the entry step from the roadway.

So congratulations to AC Transit for hiring this type of person!

Mrs. Esther Jones
Berkeley

* * *

A few days ago, a little after 11 p.m., I was sitting on the bench at Grand Ave. and Broadway waiting for a 42, a 59 or 76 bus heading north. A 51 bus stopped and the driver, Chet Walden, questioned me and advised that those buses didn't run that late.

I gratefully got into his bus to go home. I think Mr. Walden should be highly commended for performing a service above and beyond the proverbial call of duty. I feel very grateful to him.

Mildred Keppelman
Oakland

* * *

I wish to say that Mr. William A. Scott is the most helpful and considerate driver I have encountered in my 50 years of bus riding.

I had a guest recently and we rode on the line Mr. Scott drives. My friend was so impressed with him she even mentioned him in her letter to me.

We are so apt to complain when things don't please us, I feel we should give credit when credit is due.

Mrs. F. C. Merkel
Oakland

* * *

I should like to comment upon the professional manner in which a lady driver handled herself on a bus I rode recently.

Rideship impressive

'Country Coach' comes to Moraga/Orinda

A new bus service that has blown both "hot and cold" with residents started this month in Moraga and Orinda with free rides.

The courtesy rides were offered on the new system during the first week, Sept. 13-17, so everybody could try out the new transit experience. And a lot of people did.

Ridership figures for first day service indicated a very favorable response by residents. A total of 934 passengers trips were made with 744 passengers trips on Line 350 and 190 made on Line 351.

THE COVER — Country Coach leaves BART/Orinda station with first day load of riders bound for the Town of Moraga and St. Mary's College.

Commuters were able to ride without paying to BART/Orinda or BART/Lafayette and discovered the obvious — if trips were planned in accord with schedules, the buses got to the stations in exactly the same time as automobiles — with no time wasted in parking.

Heavy shopper use

Women and young persons, particularly, were predominant in the first days of off-peak riding, taking advantage of an opportunity to ride to either BART station or to shopping areas — including Moraga Center, The Park at Rheem the Crossroads and the Village at Orinda.

Information on the service, including map and schedules, was mailed to residences in Moraga and to the Orinda area south of the freeway.

Green and yellow cards in the windows of stores and other establishments welcomed "The Country Coach" experimental bus system, as did ads in neighborhood newspapers.

Signs, capping regular bus stops along Moraga Way and Moraga Rd., announced the same invitation.

AC Transit information clerks also were at BART stations to hand out information on the service. Distribution of leaflets and timetables was made to St. Mary's College, which is subsidizing free transit for students and staff members.

Start-up of the system was postponed after residents objected to buses in their neighborhoods and to bus stops in front of homes. Agreement was reached for service to be operated via Moraga Way and Moraga Rd. only, with residents to vote on continuation of the bus system in March.

Four new small buses have been ordered for the operation and now are being manufactured by Minibus in southern California. They will be 25 feet long and seat 25 passengers.
Bus riding safer than ever

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS PER 100,000 MILES

PASSENGER ACCIDENTS PER 1,000,000 PASSENGERS CARRIED

THOUSANDS OF MILES OPERATED PER ACCIDENT

Safest year yet

AC Transit passengers rode safer than ever during the last fiscal year, reports show.

Figures reflecting an all-time safe driving record were registered for 1975-76.

Operators recorded 14,839 safe driving miles per accident for the fiscal year, compared to 14,132 during the previous fiscal year.

Passenger accident frequency per one million passengers and traffic accident frequency per 100,000 miles reached a record low.

Traffic accidents decrease

A review of statistics showed that traffic accident frequency decreased by 11.8 percent over the last five years, by 19.2 percent compared to 10 years ago, and by a whopping 29.6 percent when compared with the 1960-61 fiscal year, the first year AC Transit went into operation.

Traffic accident frequency per 100,000 miles was 5.15 for 1975-76 as opposed to 5.32 in 1974-75.

Passenger accident frequency per one million passengers was 6.80 compared to 7.53 in 1974-75.

In addition, divisions beat the monthly safe driving goal of 13,250 miles per chargeable accident a total of 38 times during the year.

Emeryville Division held the record by topping the goal 11 times, while Newark Division came in second with 10 times. Seminary Division bettered the "safety bogey" nine times with Richmond Division beating the goal eight times during the year.

In 11 of the 12 months, the District total of miles per accident exceeded the 13,250 bogey.

The District's elite membership of operators who have driven for 25 years without a chargeable accident grew to 16 with a combined total of 400 years of safe driving.

Board of Directors reduce taxes

Property taxes are being cut this year for most AC Transit taxpayers.

A new consolidated rate of 45.9 cents per $100 of assessed valuation was set last month by the District Board of Directors for Special Service District 1, which includes 11 urban cities stretching from San Pablo to Hayward.

Tax rate cut 1.4 cents

The rate is a reduction of 1.4 cents below last year's consolidated rate of 47.3 cents.

Because of a difference in assessment ratio, taxpayers in Alameda County will pay 44.8 cents per $100 of assessed valuation. Alameda County for this year was assessed at 25.8 percent of market value. The state legislature requires all counties to assess at 25 percent of market value.

In Contra Costa County, where the assessment is 22.3 percent of market value, the tax rate will be 50.9 cents.

The consolidated reduction essentially reflects an increase in assessed valuation, with much of the increase being retained to help pay for higher operating costs.

Directors at the same time set the rate for Special Service District 2, including Fremont and Newark, at 33 cents per $100 of assessed valuation, the same as it was last fiscal year.

The transit system as a whole, including both districts and contract services, projects expenditures during 1976-77 of $56,612,900 and income of $40,661,200. A deficit of $15,751,700 is expected to be covered by State and Federal subsidies and by an estimated $3,700,400 in contingency reserves.

STUDENT HELPERS — Registration week at Diablo Valley College brought Transit Information Clerk Cathy Villela, at left, to the Contra Costa County campus in helping orient students to AC Transit service.

JOY GRANER, of Transit Information, traveled to St. Mary's College in Moraga for registration week as arriving students learned a new bus system to the campus was about to be inaugurated. The college is subsidizing free rides for students and staff on AC Transit buses which began rolling in Moraga and Orinda on Sept. 13.
Buses in three different sizes provided news for AC Transit this month.

These were the developments:
- The first heavy duty small bus, built to AC Transit specifications, "topped out" at the Minibus plant in Southern California.
- Contract was awarded for a fleet of articulated buses.
- Bids were opened for newly designed coaches that will meet the latest California clean air standards.

At the Minibus plant, the body of a prototype bus was fitted to the frame and workers were proceeding with finishing the interior and with testing components. Construction of frames and suspension systems was underway on other units.

Twenty-three of the newly designed small coaches will be used in neighborhood service in Fremont and Newark; four were purchased for operation in Moraga/Orinda and two for Pleasant Hill.

Ten transit properties across the nation joined in awarding a contract to AM General Corp. for 234 articulated buses. The price exceeds $42,000,000 without sales tax, but including delivery and spare parts—one of the biggest financial bus packages in the history of the transit industry.

AM General will work jointly with M.A.N. of West Germany in producing the new units, which are hinged in the middle.

Award of the contract climaxes years of activity on the part of properties looking for buses with higher seating capacity to handle considerable passenger growth without putting more coaches on the street.

AC Transit, which is purchasing 30 of the 60-foot long buses, began experimentation with a double unit in 1966 and led the program to acquire additional larger units. Alan L. Bingham, general manager of AC Transit, is chairman of the articulated bus consortium which put together the joint transit purchasing package.

Six properties, including AC Transit, are acquiring 155 buses 60 feet long, while four properties are purchasing 79 buses of 55 foot length. The longer buses, which seat 69 passengers, will be manufactured first and delivery is expected to start in March, 1978, and extend through February, 1979.

Bids were opened in Houston, Tex., early in the month for advance design buses which will offer better viewing, more comfortable riding, temperature control and improved maintenance features.

But they won't be cheap. Bids for 66 buses specified by AC Transit were quoted at $91,500 per coach, plus delivery charges and taxes. General Motors Corp. was the only bidder.

GMC previously agreed if it was the only bidder it would consent to a government audit of costs that make up the price of the bus to affirm it is a reasonable figure. AC Transit does not plan to make an award of contract until after the audit is completed.

In the meantime, award of contract for a total of 418 of the new buses, including the 66 for the District, also is being held up because of a law suit filed by AM General in Federal District Court, alleging the specifications favor GMC.

The design includes snap-on side panels and other features expected to save nearly $14,000 per bus in costs over the 15-year life expectancy of each coach.

AC Transit is on the end of delivery time because GMC needed time to meet California 1977 clean air standards.
'Mini-streetcar' preceded Minibus

Minibuses slated for suburban use recall a time when public transit met neighborhood needs with a similar vehicle — the "mini-streetcar."

A few years prior to World War I, street railway companies became convinced that the East Bay's growing suburbs required a streetcar which could easily negotiate narrow streets. It was in 1916 when an answer arrived.

A newer, smaller streetcar was developed; a four-wheel, 28-foot long coach which could be operated safely by one person. Most streetcars of that day had two employees on them, a motorman and a conductor.

Ordinances changed

In addition, most cities required both employees to be aboard the vehicle when in use. Local ordinances were changed, however, as streetcar firms impressed upon city officials the advantages of a smaller streetcar.

It came to be known as the Birney Car, named after its developer, Mr. Charles Birney.

The car was lightweight and economical as it didn't need much electricity to power its two 25-horsepower motors.

The East Bay enjoyed the services of 25 Birney Cars, which were manufactured at the American Car Company of St. Louis. They saw service on some of the lighter traveled lines of the East Bay Street Railways, a part of the old Key System, AC Transit's predecessor.

Usage widespread

The Birney Cars were used on some Alameda lines, a short lived express streetcar operation on Telegraph Ave., the Rockridge line on Broadway Terrace between College Ave. and Broadway and on the Park Ave. line in Albany, among others.

These mini-streetcars met great popularity, especially among younger riders.

However, when the bus appeared on the scene most of the less patronized streetcar lines were converted to bus operation. In the East Bay, the Birney Car was slowly phased back into the car barn and by 1937 all cars of this type had been scrapped.

(Photograph and research material were provided by Fresno transit historian James H. Harrison.)

Merrithew becomes 17th driver To join 25 year Safe Driving Club

Francis B. "Bert" Merrithew, veteran Richmond Division operator, has become the 17th District driver to reach 25 years of driving a bus without a chargeable accident.

J. Dale Goodman, transportation manager, praised Merrithew for his outstanding service and "extreme courtesy" to riders during ceremonies held in Merrithew's honor Sept. 8.

Three generations of Merrithews were present to see the driver receive his 25 year Safe Driving arm patch and lapel pin. Following the presentation, cake and ice cream were enjoyed in the gillie room as Merrithew recalled his years in public transit.

He was born in McCloud, Calif. in August, 1918 and worked in the Richmond Shipyards during World War II. Merrithew joined AC Transit's predecessor, Key System Transit Lines, in May, 1944 and transferred to Richmond Division when the division opened in September, 1947, where he has remained.
Cooper beats out local competition
To represent District in Bus Roadeo
Edward Everett Cooper Jr., an 11 year veteran of Richmond Division, emerged this month as winner of local Bus Roadeo competitions and will represent AC Transit in October at the First National Bus Roadeo in San Francisco.

Cooper will vie with drivers from transit agencies across the country to determine who holds the title of "best driver" nationwide.

Cooper beat out 59 AC Transit drivers in local competitions to win first place and compete nationally. A trophy signifying Cooper's achievement locally was to be presented late this month.

Second and third place trophies also went to drivers B. R. McCaslin of Newark Division and R. R. Freund of Seminary Division respectively.

District trials were held Aug. 7, 14, 21 and Aug. 28, when Cooper tallied highest total score in several areas of competition.

Drivers faced four categories of competition in local selection. They included a 20-question safety quiz, pre-trip inspection of a bus with equipment problems, personal appearance and the driving test.

Operators drove a coach through a test course designed with specific traffic problems. Grading was done on the basis of the drivers' safety habits and ability to smoothly resolve or avoid hazardous conditions.

May win $1,000
Cooper now awaits the chance to win a $1,000 first place savings bond in national competitions in San Francisco's Cow Palace Oct. 18 and 19. Second place winner will receive a $500 savings bond.

Cooper, 36, joined AC Transit on Oct. 6, 1965 and resides in Richmond, which is the focal point of the Coopers' lives. Not only does he live and work in Richmond, but his wife, Faye, also is an AC Transit bus driver who is stationed at Richmond Division.

The Coopers have five daughters and two sons.

Hilltop service attracting many riders
Initial ridership reports for new bus service to Richmond's Hilltop Mall indicate a favorable reception from riding shoppers.

Coaches carried from 15 to 20 passengers per trip on the first day, considered a good figure for inaugural service.

Buses on three existing lines began extending into Hilltop on the center's opening day, Sept. 2.

Transit Information operator Francine Wilber was on hand at the center's opening day to help Hilltop's information booth personnel in distributing AC Transit pocket schedules and a brochure detailing service to Hilltop.

Close to 10,000 such brochures were distributed to various youth and senior citizens centers prior to the opening, as well as to local Chamber of Commerce offices.

NEW HILLTOP service is explained to information booth personnel by Transit Information Clerk Francine Wilber.
Actions of the Board

At an adjourned regular meeting August 19, the Board of Directors:

- Awarded contract to AM General Corp. for 30 articulated buses and spare units, parts and tires, subject to UMTA approval and adopted resolution authorizing filing amendment to UMTA grant for aid in financing purchase, on motion of Director Nakadegawa. (See story, Pg. 6)

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At an adjourned regular meeting August 25, the Board of Directors:

- Authorized participation in Bay Area Urban Transit Institute, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Adopted Final Operating Estimate for fiscal 1976-77, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Authorized one management representative to travel to Washington, D.C., for purpose of expediting UMTA processing procedures and procurement of Federal Operating Assistance funds, on motion of Director Rinehart. (See story, Pg. 5)

- Adopted resolution fixing property taxes in District No. 1 and District No. 2 for fiscal 1976-77, on motion of Director Rinehart.

All divisions beat safe driving goal

All divisions beat the safe driving goal for the month of July, in terms of miles driven per accident.

With a goal of 13,250 miles per chargeable accident, the District-wide average for July was 15,963.