Testing prototype wheelchair lift
Survey suggests variety of options which Could meet needs of elderly, handicapped

It would take a combination of services, priced from $4 million to $18 million a year, to take care of the unmet transit needs of elderly and handicapped people in East Bay cities, according to a six-month study.

A detailed survey has turned up 660 people out of a population of 1,133,000 East Bay residents who could get to a bus stop but need a wheelchair lift on regular AC Transit bus service.

Initial costs to equip the 900-bus fleet with lifts is estimated at more than $8 million. Annual cost to maintain and replace the lifts is estimated at $990,000 or $27.50 per one-way trip for wheelchair users.

The projections are based on 100 trips a day by persons in wheelchairs using fixed-route service.

Actually, a six-month study ordered by AC Transit found a variety of unmet transit needs among elderly and handicapped people in 13 cities — San Pablo south to Hayward plus Fremont and Newark.

**Costly alternatives**

The study proposed transit alternatives ranging from a full Dial-A-Ride system to wheelchair lifts and lower bus steps, coordinated with social service agency feeder services. The price tags range from $4 million to $18 million a year.

Each alternative represents a tremendous increase over AC Transit's present cost of 83 cents per passenger trip in the East Bay urban area.

The study, first major assessment of transportation problems of the elderly and handicapped in the AC Transit service area, found approximately 66,000 transit handicapped, or about six percent of the total population. Most, however, can use the existing bus system, but with some difficulty.

Unmet transit needs amount to about 7,700 one-way trips per average weekday.

Total systems suggested by Crain & Associates, consultants who conducted the study, include:

- **Zonal Dial-A-Ride, feeding to BART,** at an estimated annual cost of $18 million, or $14 a passenger trip.
- **Taxi ride discounts,** providing the same type of door step service, estimated to cost up to $14 million annually, or $11 per one-way ride.
- **Lower front steps and more handrails** on existing service, with zonal contract Dial-A-Ride for severely handicapped, priced up to $10 million, or $5.40 per trip.
- **Wheelchair lifts and lower steps** on regular buses, coordinated with transportation provided by social service agencies, estimated at $4 million, or $3.57 per one-way trip.

All four alternatives include a relatively low cost package involving driver training, priority seating for the elderly and handicapped, teletype equipment for a deaf transit information service and an “Outreach” program to inform the elderly and handicapped in use of existing public transportation.
Media message is delivered by riders

Positive public reaction to TV commercials featuring Oakland Raider Phil Villapiano has spawned another season “on the tube” for Villapiano as AC Transit’s media “star”. But in the new spots now being shown on Bay Area stations, Villapiano has two “co-stars” — Waverly Jenkins and Ann Vanderslice, both AC Transit patrons.

In the commercials, filmed locally, Villapiano is shown strolling casually with Jenkins and Vanderslice as they explain why they find riding the bus a convenient and efficient alternative to driving.

The 30-second spots conclude with one of nine different messages, spoken by Villapiano, about various aspects of service.

Next month a new series of newspaper ads in East Bay dailies, weeklies, and selected “shoppers” will feature comments, gleaned from interviews with riders representing different service areas, on the advantages of taking the bus.

Some of these comments:

- “(The bus is) quicker and faster and cheaper — it’s pure economics.” (Piedmont rider)
- “It’s just easier than driving. I can climb on and forget about driving.” (Albany rider)
- “The reason I started riding was to conserve gas.” (Fremont rider)

New radio commercials, also featuring remarks from riders, begin in January.

The year’s media plan also includes outdoor posters and posters on buses.

District retirees Tell leisure plans After long careers

When Benton Tomlin, 55, retired Aug. 1 after 15 years as a driver, it was his second career farewell. He had retired after 22 years of Navy service before joining AC Transit in 1962.

Tomlin and wife Ruth, who had lived in Alameda, chose to spend their retirement years in Summit City, Calif., a hunting and fishing paradise where the Tomlin’s mobile home is located just six blocks from Shasta Dam. His most recent fishing outing at the dam, using his own boat, garnered a catch of 10 trout, he reported, adding that he also expected to take advantage of the fine deer hunting opportunities this season.

Tomlin was with Emeryville Division, mostly on Line 51, during his entire period with AC Transit. His only regret at retirement, he says, is that he “misses the drivers”.

Leisure living

Retirement means taking life easy and having more time to spend “with girlfriends”, according to A.M. Daniels, Jr., 66, whose leisure years began Mar. 1.

Daniels joined the Maintenance Department in 1961. Starting as a cleaner, he advanced to leadman, his position at retirement. His entire period of service was spent at Richmond Division.

With his years at AC Transit added to his previous period of time as a mechanic with a bus system in Sacramento, Daniels completed nearly 30 years in the transit field. Earlier, he completed a long tour of Army Air Corps duty in the Pacific during World War II.

He has no current plans to move from his Point Richmond apartment for a leisure-oriented life elsewhere, preferring to stay put and to enjoy the bachelor life.

Oregon bound

A move from Oakland to Oregon, where he expects to make good use of the golf course across the street from his home in Creswell, near Eugene, is the first order of retirement business for Leroy Boardman.

When he retired Oct. 1 at age 60, Boardman had completed nearly 31 years of transit service, beginning with two years on streetcars. These “fascinated” him so much that he changed occupations — he was previously an auto mechanic — for the opportunity of operating them. When they were phased out in 1948, his subsequent 29 years were spent operating buses out of Emeryville Division.

Besides golf, leisure time activities planned by Boardman include fishing (using his own boat) and travel. He and wife Martha, who’ll retire from her 14-year position as an Oakland librarian this year, plan a trip next year to the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean.

Redding is home

Fifteen years of Air Force duty — during both the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts — were sandwiched between Elsworth Wales’ first period as a driver with Key System (starting Jan., 1950) and his second period with AC Transit (starting Jan., 1967).

Piloting a bus probably came naturally to Wales, since his Air Force background was in pilot training. In addition, he spent six years as a radar controller.

Before retiring Mar. 1, Wales was with Seminary Division, where he worked nearly all the time prior to leaving. He and wife Jerry, who previously lived in Fremont, have moved to Redding. His only regret, he says, is that his retirement and moving-away year also is a drought year, lowering the joy of fishing at much-favored Lake Shasta.

Among the activities which keep Wales busy these days are gardening and golf.
Sue Dodge is ceramics enthusiast

With an estimated $10,000 investment in equipment — including more than 500 different molds and two kilns — Sue Dodge, a driver at Seminary Division, is obviously more than casually involved in the craft of ceramics.

And no one is more surprised than Sue herself that she has become such a creative training in art or crafts.

As Christmas approaches, and is anxious to tryout some of the 100 new molds (costing as much as $150 each) which she purchased this year.

Much variety

Sue's ceramic items are highly varied both in form and function. She creates lamp bases, steins, clock faces, flower pots, figurines, serving dishes, and even commemorative plates customized for the weddings of co-workers.

She expects to be especially productive during World War II (piloting not only buses, but also trucks, jeeps, and semis) before donning the uniform of a "conductorette" on transbay trains until they were phased out by Key System in 1958. Switching to buses, she was with Emeryville Division initially, then transferred to Seminary. She has completed more than 25 years of service.

Her career in transit has been a long and varied one. She was a civilian driver for the Navy at Treasure Island during World War II (piloting not only buses, but also trucks, jeeps, and semis) before donning the uniform of a "conductorette" on transbay trains until they were phased out by Key System in 1958. Switching to buses, she was with Emeryville Division initially, then transferred to Seminary. She has completed more than 25 years of service.

At one time, Sue had two brothers and one sister as fellow operators. Now she and Daniel Padilla, a nephew who is a driver at Newark Division, are the two members of the family still at AC Transit.
Actions of the Board

At an adjourned regular meeting September 28, the Board of Directors:

- Awarded contract for furnishing bus passenger shelters to Handi-Hut, Inc., subject to compliance with specifications, on motion of Director Rinehart.

- Authorized General Manager to negotiate on open market, with no minimum, for sale of three older GMC buses, on motion of Director Rinehart.

- Rejected sole bid received for furnishing one electro-mechanical counter/sorter and authorized General Manager to negotiate on open market for this item, on motion of Director Rinehart.

- Authorized sending one participant to Urban Mass Transportation Management Seminar at Northeastern University, on motion of Director Godkin.

- Authorized General Manager to execute contract with Haskins & Sells, consultants, for assistance in implementing uniform system of accounts, records, and financial reporting, subject to UMTA approval, on motion of Director Rinehart.

RARE RECORD — Leo and Montry Sasges (with daughter Judy observing) shared cake-cutting and honors at Richmond Division as he celebrated receiving the 25-year Safe-Driving Award. In 26 years, Sasges never had a miss-out; called in sick just once; and transported two-and-a-half million passengers over 1,846,000 accident-free miles.

Safety score-card

Newark Division exceeded the monthly safe driving goal by a wide margin in September, averaging 83,043 miles between accidents. The monthly goal is 13,250 miles per chargeable accident. Richmond Division averaged 19,102 miles between mishaps; Emeryville Division averaged 15,957.