Alan L. Bingham
1925 - 1978
What the Press is saying about transit

Independent and Gazette

Bingham a giant in transit industry

The AC Transit system is the finest in California and one of the best in the nation. The man who more than any other, developed the excellence of the two-county bus system — Alan Bingham — is dead.

The loss of any public servant in the prime of his productivity is a double loss — one to his family and associates and the other to a public which has never been in any greater need of outstanding officials.

BART General Manager Frank Herringer summed up the loss Bingham's heart attack created when he commented: “It's a big loss to transit, not only here in the Bay Area, but nationally as well.

Oakland Tribune

The death of AC Transit General Manager Alan L. Bingham is a stunning loss to the Bay Area.

Mr. Bingham was the driving force in a transportation system that is among the best in the nation.

Not only was Mr. Bingham one of the nation's leading transportation experts, he was a civic leader dedicated to the improvement of the Eastbay community.

His untimely death leaves a great void.

Alan Bingham was effective.

He was effective at AC Transit which he turned into a model bus operation.

He was effective before Congressional committees where he so often spoke in favor of the transit viewpoint.

He was effective as the industry's most articulate spokesman for new buses and he tirelessly journeyed to Washington or wherever to fight for that cause.

"Al was a real leader at the American Public Transit Association. He was always recognized throughout the county as running one of the best bus systems that exists.

"He was a driving force behind the Bay Area Transit Association, getting the managers together. He's going to be missed."

Al Bingham had a brilliant mind, outstanding organizational abilities, a winning personality and a keen political sense when dealing with legislators and labor leaders. Continuing his tradition of excellence will be most difficult, but it must be done if AC Transit is to maintain its outstanding service to the public.

THE COVER — “The East Bay, AC Transit and the entire transit industry lost a dynamic and innovative leader with the death of Alan Bingham.

"At the youthful age of 42, he assumed the helm of AC Transit in 1967 as its third General Manager and immediately proceeded to mold it into one of the nation's most effective, best-operated systems.

"Progressive by nature, he also gradually surrounded himself with a young, forward-looking executive staff which he leaves behind as a testimony to his record of leadership and performance.

"He also showed compassion for his neighbor by finding time to advance charitable and other civic causes.

"A loving husband and father, Alan L. Bingham also was a dear friend to many, including each member of the Board of Directors who held him in the highest esteem."

John L. McConnell
President
Board of Directors

Alan L. Bingham dies at age 52

Alan L. Bingham, 52, general manager of AC Transit since 1967, suffered a heart attack in his Latham Square office Jan. 3 and died at an Oakland hospital a short time afterwards. Funeral services were Jan. 6.

A recognized leader in the public transit industry, Bingham joined AC Transit in 1958 as Public Relations and Advertising Manager. He was one of the handful of men who promoted the idea of public transit in East Bay cities and who spearheaded passage of the $16 million bond issue which put the District in business.

He participated in and directed numerous national groups in public transit, including the Bus Technology Committee of the American Public Transit Association (APTA).

His local leadership in public transportation included serving as chairman of the newly-formed Regional Transit Association of the Bay Area.

Bingham also was active in civic affairs and charitable organizations in the Bay Area. He had served on the Board of Directors of the Cerebral Palsy Foundation of Alameda County, had been active in the county's Tuberculosis and Health Association, and had been on the board of directors of the Lincoln Child Care Center in Oakland, the Metropolitan Oakland YMCA and numerous other civic organizations.

His many career-oriented activities included participation in the Advertising Association of the West, the Oakland Advertising Club, the American Advertising Federation, the Public Relations Society of America, the Bay Area Publicity Club, the San Francisco Press Club and the Northern California and Nevada Advertising Association.

Bingham graduated from the University of California School of Business Administration at Berkeley and was active as an accountant and as a newspaper man with the Berkeley Gazette and the San Francisco Examiner before entering the transit industry.

A veteran of World War II, Bingham earned the Bronze Star for his participation in the invasion of Iwo Jima.

He is survived by his widow, Joyce; two sons, Richard and Philip; and a daughter, Mrs. Jean Jones. The family home is in Piedmont.
Strike ends; buses are operating

The strike against AC Transit ended late in January, 68 days after members of Amalgamated Transit Union, Division 192, walked off the job.

Union members ratified a contract proposal Jan. 27 which returned bus drivers to work at an hourly wage of $8.35 — 32 cents more than they earned when the strike began. Similar wage hikes, reflecting cost-of-living increases, were paid to maintenance and clerical workers.

The strike idled the District's 826 buses last Nov. 21 after negotiators representing the 1883 union members rejected a proposal that would have given drivers an average annual wage of more than $20,000.

Other provisions in the November offer provided substantial improvements in the pension plan, assuring future retirees about three-to-two.

After the union went out on strike, District negotiators repeatedly offered to make adjustments within the financial framework of that November proposal — adjustments that would not increase the cost of the package, and the financial burden on the taxpayers and bus riders who pay for it.

In mid-January, the negotiators came to agreement on a complex series of adjustments in the District proposal which didn’t exceed original cost projections.

Union leaders recommended those adjustments to the rank-and-file during a meeting Jan. 15. The union members rejected the recommendation by a margin of about three-to-two.

Negotiators for both sides in the dispute then returned to the bargaining table for another week, during which they hammered out the labor package that won union acceptance and ended the strike.

As service resumed, Acting General Manager Robert E. Nisbet commented, “We have just gone through a painful period; it’s time to get on with the job.”

“The District’s excellence is a tradition which we must all work to uphold.”

“This has to be a team effort,” he said.

January actions

Board appoints Nisbet Acting General Manager; McDonnell, Nakadegawa re-elected as officers

Robert E. Nisbet, who played an active role in formation of the district 20 years ago, was appointed acting general manager by the board of directors at a Jan. 9 session.

Nisbet, 59, assumes the post left vacant by the death on Jan. 3 of Alan L. Bingham. He will serve while the board considers selection of a permanent general manager.

As AC Transit’s chief legal advisor, Nisbet has been responsible for advising board and management on legal matters relating to all phases of operating a public transit district. In addition, he has served as the district’s legislative liaison. This has entailed monitoring legislation affecting public transit and representing the district before and within public agencies and legislative bodies.

Nisbet is a graduate of UC, Berkeley, with a law degree from Hastings. He and wife Patricia make their home in Berkeley.

He was hired as the district’s first full-time employee in 1957.

Board officers

John L. McDonnell, president of the AC Transit board of directors, has been chosen for a second one-year term by other members of the transit district’s policy-setting body.

McDonnell was selected at a Jan. 11 meeting of the board. Also selected for a second term was board vice-president Roy Nakadegawa.

McDonnell, a veteran business leader in the East Bay, was involved with the formation of AC Transit as a public entity 22 years ago and has served on the bus system’s board of directors since the district was created in 1956. He previously served as president of the board in 1967-68.

Nakadegawa, a senior civil engineer for the City of Richmond, was first elected to the board in November, 1972.

Both men will serve as officers of the board of directors through 1978.

Retired trainman, 93, Dies in Walnut Creek

Wilbur Gray, 93, a retiree whose period of service with AC Transit predecessor companies amounted to 45 years, died in Walnut Creek Dec. 17. He began his transit career in 1904 as a conductor. His employment was interrupted by illness, but he was re-instated by Key System in 1924.

After serving as conductor, brakeman, and assistant train director, he held various Treasury Department posts with Key System. At the time of his retirement in 1949, Gray was a ticket custodian.

He is survived by his widow, Marian L. Gray.

Burial was at Sunset View Cemetery, El Cerrito.
Projects for present, guidelines for future
Make up schedule of Research and Planning

What's ahead for AC Transit in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years?
Will present physical facilities be adequate to meet future needs?
Upon what data or statement of policy will future decisions on operations be based?
Concerns and questions such as these are among those which occupy the small staff headed by Donald S. Larson, research and planning manager, who says of his job, "There is nothing routine about it."
A review of the projects which the four-member department headed, or coordinated, last year and of others which are on the schedule for 1978 tend to bear out this assessment.
Implementation last June of contract service in Eastern Contra Costa County capped a 2 1/2-year district effort. In this the department worked with county and community representatives and coordinated with other AC Transit departments, including Transportation, Schedule, and Marketing.
Also wrapped up last year was a six-month study of transportation needs of East Bay elderly and handicapped. Responsibility for this survey meant working with the outside consultant who compiled the data, acting as liaison with two advisory committees, and reporting to board and management on survey results and on recommendations.
Two other projects concerning handicapped persons are currently on the work schedule. One involves equipping a Concord contract service coach with wheelchair lift and securement devices. The other entails acting as the district's liaison for a year-long CALTRANS project to test a wheelchair access device installed on a coach used in BART express service.
Another on-going project is a study of bus route operations to discover factors, such as street conditions and signal-timing, which tend to cause schedule delays. Based on data collected, a set of possible solutions will be drawn up. This study benefits from the advice and aid of an advisory committee of public works engineers.
A key project soon to be launched is a 15-month effort aimed at developing a five-year operating plan for the district. This will mean defining AC Transit's goals and policies and evaluating current operations and programs to develop a "Short-Range Transit Plan."
This is the first step, Larson says, toward formalizing — for the first time — the district's planning process: building a policy frame-work on which to base future decisions on route expansion, service curtailment, fares, new contract service and on other matters crucial to operating an efficient, cost-effective system.
Also on the schedule for 1978 is a comprehensive study of physical facilities. Result would be a cost-analysis and master plan for space utilization to meet future needs. Such data, for instance, would be used in deciding whether replacement or (Continued on page 8)

STAFF CONFERENCE—Donald S. Larson, research and planning manager (center), confers with Theodore Reynolds, transportation planner (left), and Gene Gardiner, senior transportation planner.

Retirements
Effinger, Kurtz begin leisure years

An electrician all his working life, George A. Effinger had completed 33 years of helping to keep coaches in top condition when he retired Jan. 1. He joined Key System in 1944, and estimates that 30 years of his service were spent at Emeryville Division's maintenance department.
George and wife Helen were jointly involved in yet another type of career for almost 20 years. They served as boarding parents for 168 newborn babies who were awaiting adoption. This amazing record of foster-parenting so many babies of all races was in addition to rearing their own family.
Their son, Gordon, and daughter, Susan Pool, have presented the couple with six grandchildren: Jason, Gordon, Jr., Scott, Lonnie, Rosa, and Christopher.
The Effingers' leisure time is being spent around their home in Castro Valley, an area where George's grandparents settled about 50 years ago.

NEW RETIREES — George A. Effinger (left) is shown in Emeryville Division's electrical maintenance shop, while J. Fred Kurtz (above) is pictured celebrating retirement with wife Bethia. The Effingers' leisure time is being spent around their home in Castro Valley, an area where George's grandparents settled about 50 years ago. A retiree as of Jan. 1, J. Fred Kurtz — formerly chief dispatcher, Emeryville Division — can look back on a 38-year transit career that began with operating streetcars out of Oakland's old car barns.
From this beginning, he soon transferred to operating buses, then became a receiver (of cash turned in by drivers at the end of shifts). His career as a dispatcher began...
Actions of the Board

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

- Authorized exercising option for purchase of ten bus passenger shelters, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

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At an adjourned regular meeting Jan. 4, the Board of Directors:

- Authorized retaining legislative representative for the District, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

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At an adjourned regular meeting Jan. 9, the Board of Directors:

- Appointed Robert E. Nisbet Acting General Manager, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

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At a regular meeting Jan. 11, the Board of Directors:

- Elected John McDonnell president, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Elected Roy Nakadegawa vice president, on motion of Director Rinehart.

Research and Planning projects present challenge

(Continued from page 6)

expansion/up-grading of an existing facility would be more feasible and economical. Or whether to build a new facility in a more cost-effective location.

Larson's view of his responsibilities — assumed in late 1976 and currently shared with a staff which includes Gene Gardiner and Theodore Reynolds — is that, “The challenge will be not just in the next year, but in the near future.”

A factor in this challenge, he says, is in the “tremendous demands of the state, federal, and regional agencies for data to justify what the district is doing and why.”

His department’s aim, Larson says, is to provide the formats and coordination required to develop and evaluate plans that improve service by the most efficient, effective usage of the District's limited resources.