Public hears outline
Of Five-Year Plan
What the Press is saying about transit

San Francisco Chronicle

Transit Buildup

There were, says the Bay Area Regional Transit Association, 2697 publicly-owned transit vehicles of all sorts in operation in the Bay Area last week. All were trying to cope with upwards of one million passengers each week day.

The struggle to keep up with passenger demand grew more difficult each passing day because all of these buses, streetcars, BART cars and ferry boats were suddenly the transportation of choice of a new generation of transit riders: car drivers who, finding that odd/even had not improved their gasoline luck, left their cars at home.

Public transit use shot up more than nine percent, on average, throughout the Bay Area, but far more than that in some specific regions, notably in Santa Clara County, where the increase of patronage has gone over 70 percent in two months. Transit districts in the Bay Area have responded to the present emergency by cutting inadequately patronized schedules, by emphasizing maintenance to insure the maximum availability of equipment, and by adding new employees. Substantial numbers of new vehicles are on order: AC Transit shortly will open bids for 142 new advanced design coaches, with an option for 24 more; SamTrans will receive 100 new conventional buses and ten articulated ones next year, and the San Francisco Muni is inching toward operation of its new fleet of articulated streetcars.

This kind of demand for public transportation is unlikely to subside soon; the gasoline shortage, says Chairman Haynes of Standard Oil, will be with us for the foreseeable future. It is only prudent to consider the current fuel shortage as the opening curtain on a new era of expansion in public transit.

The Carter Administration recently announced a cut of $200 million in bus acquisition funds. The transit industry is complaining bitterly about this. Conventional buses ordered today cannot be delivered for nine months to a year, even when adequate means to finance the purchase are at hand.

Clearly, public transit and the financing and manufacture of the new equipment it requires must be given a higher national priority in an age in which the private automobile seems about to assume a diminished role.

Five-year forecast

Public heard on future operations

AC Transit has tackled the problem of forecasting the future and presented a design for public transit operations in the coming half-decade.

Officially titled “AC Transit Five Year Plan Fiscal Years 1980-1984”, a draft of the report was presented in three public meetings held by the Board of Directors during April.

Public response is being evaluated for incorporation in a final report to be presented to the Board in June.

The preliminary outline for coming years reflects a line-by-line evaluation of each of AC Transit’s 200 service routes. It calls for various adjustments, including both new service and reduction of existing operations.

In presenting the proposal, Donald S. Larson, manager of planning and research, stressed that variables, such as available funding, changes in ridership and District capabilities in manpower and equipment, would play a role in determining final decisions.

Among the recommended changes:
- Establishment of a downtown Oakland shuttle service.
- Creation of a midday weekday shuttle service from the Oakland City Center area to medical facilities on “Pill Hill” at 30th St. and Summit St.
- General increasing of service in central Contra Costa County.
- Extension of existing service in South Hayward to BART/Union City.
- Increased service on BART extension bus routes.
- Elimination of Line 84-Castro Valley.
- Reduction in service on Lines 12-Oakland Army Base-Grand Ave.; Line 38-Bancroft Express; Line 46-Arthur Bancroft; Line 87-55th Ave.-Maxwell Park and Line T-Treasure Island. Fare adjustments on Line T-Treasure Island are projected.

Additionally, overall fare increases are forecast for the fiscal year 1981-82.

The plan notes that all service in Fremont and Newark (Special Transit Service District No. 2) is “undergoing substantial review with analysis of alternative designs.”

No bus tours this year

Because of restrictions

AC Transit’s popular Summer Sunshine Fun Tours will not be offered this year because of restrictions on fuel availability and manpower.

General Manager Robert E. Nisbet said the cancellation of the tours was made for “a number of reasons, including the pressing need to make the most efficient use of drivers and fuel.”

Nisbet said he was “hopeful” the tours would be resumed in the summer of 1980. They began operation in 1966.

Last year 20 different excursions were offered during 83 days of operation.

THE COVER — In public meetings held last month, Research and Planning representatives — headed by Donald S. Larson, manager (inset, below) — outlined the System’s plan for operating during the coming five years. Providing information during the forums were Anita Winkler (top), who discussed recommended operating improvements, and Ted Reynolds (center), who reviewed possible service adjustments. Members of the public who spoke at the meetings included Janet Rodelander (bottom) of Hayward.
Plan calls for facilities improvements

A 211-page report to the AC Transit Board of Directors details deficiencies and problems at each of the four divisional operation yards and in the downtown Oakland general offices.

Support facilities for operation "have not kept pace with needs of the expanding system," the report maintains, while AC Transit services "have been expanded significantly since the District was established in 1960."

To assist in meeting the most critical of current needs, a five-year plan is suggested including:

- A new central maintenance facility to be developed apart from the current Emeryville location.
- A new division yard to be established in or near the City of Concord.
- Acquisition of a site in Southern Alameda County to replace the Newark Division yard.
- Seminary Division pavement repairs, installation of a new paint booth, closed circuit television security system and provision of a temporary building for division transportation activities at ground level near Seminary Ave.

Long-range plan

A long-range plan calls for:

- Redevelopment of the Seminary Division.
- Complete development of a full-size division to replace Newark.
- Complete development of a division to replace Seminary.
- New general offices.

The entire plan for the next twenty years calls for a seven-division system with 1,600 buses. Cost would be an estimated $91.7 million (1979 dollars). However, if matching funds can be obtained, AC Transit's share would average less than one-million dollars per year, the report says.

Two retiree deaths reported

Two deaths have been reported from among the ranks of retirees.

George R. Stewart, 86, who was an assistant dispatcher at Richmond Division when he retired in 1951, died May 12 in Livermore. His 27 years of service began in 1924 when he joined AC Transit's predecessor organization as a conductor. He became a motor coach operator in 1936, then switched to dispatch in 1942.

He is survived by his widow, Bess, and a daughter, Doris.

Arnold M. Meyer, 73, who retired in 1972 after 31 years of service to transit, died March 27 in Berkeley. Death was attributed to a heart attack.

At the time of his retirement, which ended a career that began in 1941, Meyer was a driver at Emeryville Division.

He is survived by his widow, Edith, and a son, Tom. The family home is in Berkeley.

Homes, projects keep retirees busy

Brad Harriman, now enjoying the good life at his retirement home in Vacaville, sums up his 23 years as a dispatcher at Richmond Division with the thought, "I always enjoyed the drivers; I appreciated their problems." With retirement, Harriman actually was winding up the second of two periods of service in transit. The first was from 1946 to 1953 when he served as a streetcar operator, then a bus driver. After an interim stint as an aircraft production worker, he re-joined AC Transit's predecessor organization, taking up the duties of dispatcher that he held until retirement.

The Harrimans — Estie is a retired teacher — have a joint family from previous marriages that consists of 6 children and 13 grandchildren, so family gatherings are apt to be decidedly lively. The couple particularly enjoy the quiet of their "Leisure Town" home, plus the social/recreational opportunities it affords. They also are active in church work, and Brad is now delving into a new hobby, the craft of stained glass.

After 33 years in public transit, it is difficult to stay out of the business, says Edward Johnson, whose retirement as an operator at Seminary Division is now official. That is why Johnson is considering a job as school bus driver in Medford, Ore., where he and wife Grace, the parents of three, have settled.

"We moved up there the end of March," he says, "not far from Joe Troutt," another AC Transit retiree.

Johnson began his long service as a streetcar operator in 1945 after returning from World War II. He started on a "part-time basis," he says, reflecting that, "One of the things I wished they had left are those old Key System streetcars."

As he considers returning to part-time driving in Medford, Johnson intends to work in his vegetable garden and among the fruit trees around his house. He's also setting aside some time for travel.

Home work

Stating that his home in Newark provides "enough to keep me busy," Earl Thoma plans to remain, during retirement, just where he and wife Viola have lived for the past 18 years. However, the couple isn't ruling out a little travel, with the particular possibility of re-visitng Hawaii, where they vacationed two years ago.

Thoma, who had completed 37 years of service as a driver when he finished his last shift at Newark Division, began his transit career as a result of the closure of a cement plant where he'd been employed as an engineer. At that time, his uncle, Roy Butler (who retired as a driver last year) suggested that Thoma join him among the ranks of operators. At one time, Earl says, he also had a brother-in-law working here.

During his transit service, Thoma twice had the experience of helping open up new divisions — Seminary and Newark. Throughout those years, he says, "I've always enjoyed driving.”

The Thoma have a daughter, Barbara, and two grandchildren: Patrick, 14, and Susan, 11.
Car Operating expenses
Reach fuelish levels

When AC Transit patrons leave "car and care behind", how much money do they save? One indication is given in an American Automobile Association report outlining the cost of operating an intermediate-size car for a year. The tab: $2,690 per year, or 17.9 cents a mile.

Fixed costs itemized in the report included insurance, $483 per year; license, registration and taxes, $90; depreciation, $942; and finance charges, $296.

Operating costs (4.11 cents per mile, gas and oil; 1.1 cents per mile, maintenance; and .65 cents per mile, tires) were compiled before recent fuel price hikes and reported increases in cost-of-living.

Newark tops in safety

Newark Division drivers again topped the month's safety standings with their April record of 68,780 miles per chargeable accident. Emeryville Division came in second with 20,663 miles per mishap; Seminary Division was third with 14,448.

During April, operators at the four divisions drove a total of 2,543,102 miles.

Drivers to compete in Roadeo

AC Transit operators will be gearing up their driving skills for the District's Bus Roadeo competition June 30.

The competition will be held in the parking lot at Golden Gate Fields, with drivers testing their abilities as professionals both behind the wheel and in a written safety examination.

The winner will compete at the National Bus Roadeo in New York City in September.
At an adjourned regular meeting April 18, the Board of Directors:

- Adopted resolutions authorizing filing of applications for federal operating assistance and for bus replacement funds, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Awarded contract to Montague-Harriss & Co. for furnishing milling machine, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Authorized General Manager to advertise and seek bids for bus tire rental and service, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Authorized one participant to attend Transportation Research Board Conference in Washington, April 30 - May 2, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Authorized one participant to attend APTA Financial Management Committee Session in Chicago April 30, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

At a regular meeting May 9, the Board of Directors:

- Authorized General Manager to advertise and seek bids for purchase of shop tools and equipment, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Adopted resolution granting claims manager authority in handling all phases of the claims procedure, including settlements up to $5,000, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Adopted resolution granting authority to claims adjustor, claims supervisor and trial attorney to settle claims up to $750 and to General Manager to approve settlements up to $25,000, on motion of Director McDonnell.

- Approved establishment of a "restricted fund" to meet unusual or unbudgeted expenditures for facilities or operating needs; reaffirmed an existing policy of maintaining an "equipment replacement fund" to meet contractual and related financial responsibilities of the District as a recipient of federal capital improvement grants; and approved an accounting change involving status, for financial statement purposes, of employees' accrued vacation benefits, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Adopted in concept the "Master Plan of Bus Maintenance, Service, Garage, and Other Facilities"; authorized incorporation of plan into the Five-Year Plan and printing of a Final Report, subject to UMTA approval, on motion of Director Rinehart.