Drivers learn to help the handicapped rider
**Some buses get farebox-with-brain**

Riders on some East Bay bus lines were introduced to something new—a farebox with an electronic brain this month. AC Transit installed the electronic fare-collectors on buses operating out of Richmond Division.

These new fareboxes are designed to accept exact-fare-only in the form of coins, dollar bills, or passenger-convenience commute tickets. Coins (except the older-style, large Eisenhower dollar) go into a clearly-marked vertical slot atop the box. Nickels, dimes, quarters, half-dollars, and “Susan B. Anthony” dollars are all acceptable.

A currency/ticket slot accepts unfolded dollar bills—an important new feature for transbay riders who have experienced the difficulty of trying to feed paper currency into the older-style fareboxes. Passenger tickets or unfolded dollar bills go into a horizontal slot which automatically moves the bill to an enclosed plate where the driver can verify its value.

Transfers and Monthly Passes, however, still must be shown to the driver.

**Counts fares**

The space-age farebox counts and registers each fare paid. Riders hear an electronic “beep” (or two beeps in the case of two- and three-zone fares), signaling that the correct fare has been paid.

From AC Transit’s standpoint, a key feature of the new farebox is that it retains and reads-out statistical information on all fares, enabling planners to study accurate information on current bus usage. This information can then be applied to planning future transit improvements.

These examples of ever-improving transit technology are being phased into service initially on lines operating in the Berkeley-to-Richmond area, including: Local Lines 7, 31, 33, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, and 78, and Transbay Lines G, H, L, and Y.
Streamlined telephone System promises speed And calling efficiency

A new communications system went into operation this month — with a completely new set of telephone numbers for all AC Transit administrative offices.

981-4777. That’s the District’s new “main switchboard” telephone number. And “654-7878”, long familiar to District employees and patrons, is being phased out.

Various departments and units of departments now have their own Direct Dial telephone numbers and efficient intradepartmental systems which, in some offices, actually work something like satellite switchboards.

The familiar rotary dial is gone. And yesterday’s regular ringing of telephone bells has been replaced by the space-age beeps and tones of a computerized system.

At the touch of a push-button, District personnel now swiftly perform many tasks — transferring calls and arranging three-person conference calls, for example — that previously required the services of a switchboard operator.

PHONE CENTRAL — PBX operator Rita Wells has entire District telephone system at her fingertips in new typewriter-size, 300-extension electronic “switchboard”.

A new telephone directory has been distributed, and new numbers sent to people who regularly call (see box).

For a few months, 654-7878 still will be answered by a helpful PBX operator, who will aid people using the “old” number in reaching the specific party or department.

March brings improved Service via new lines

Some East Bay riders were able to take advantage this month of new and improved service.

Introduction of a new bus line in Berkeley now provides a connection between the downtown area and Grizzly Peak Boulevard. Line 8 — Shattuck Ave. - Grizzly Peak Blvd. offers a direct commute-hour link, operating at 20-minute intervals. Start-up of this service was delayed briefly to allow incorporation of ideas gleaned by District planners from a recent public hearing.

Another new line — Line 77 - Gading Rd. - Manor Ave. was launched to connect BART/Hayward and BART/ South Hayward with Industrial Parkway. Buses operate on this line at approximate 30-minute intervals from about 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Riders on Line 86 between BART and the Hayward industrial area are now benefiting from an improved schedule which has buses operating every 30 minutes instead of the previous 45-minute intervals.

Knowing the “territory”

Rep takes bus facts to varied groups

To be an AC Transit Customer Service Representative you definitely “gotta know the territory”.

The “territory,” in this case, consists of the broad spectrum of District bus service, since the position involves imparting information on bus use to groups as diverse as non-English-speaking refugees from Asia, irrepressible nursery-schoolers, and sophisticated college students.

With a demanding daily schedule of “How to ride...” presentations, anti-vandalism talks at schools, and appearances at job/transportation/energy fairs throughout the East Bay, the Customer Service Rep obviously must be well organized, flexible, patient, and highly people-oriented.

... thank you for telling us

Pioneering in this position, created just last year, is Billy Bishop, whose in-depth, hands-on knowledge of AC Transit was gained during 14 years of previous service mostly as driver, dispatcher and training instructor.

The favorable response to Bishop’s efforts is indicated by some of the feedback received, including letters of appreciation and art-work, such as the wall banner now decorating his office, which was scrawled with names, messages, and “thank yous” in multi-colored crayon.

In the course of a few work days recently, Bishop took his briefcase loaded with AC Transit schedules, maps, and informational leaflets to an Alameda center for retarded adults, two different Asian refugee centers, and a Berkeley junior high school where, for two afternoons, he rapped with students, attempting, he said, “to turn some of that negative energy around” in the cause of anti-vandalism.

Obviously, Bishop’s “sales pitch” must be custom-tailored to each group, his approach based on such factors as age, language facility, level of sophistication, and specific informational needs.

The only common ground, for instance, that seems to link 40 nursery school children with an equal number of students on the Cal Berkeley campus is their future or current need for public transit services.

In the case of his programs for preschoolers, which usually includes a bus ride, Bishop feels that “The earlier we reach them with the message the better and more responsible they’ll be as riders some day”.

about the bus...

Billy Bishop

Though he’s as effective at dealing with adults as with kids, Bishop seems to derive particular satisfaction from feedback which indicates his message has been enthusiastically received by the younger people. On his desk recently was a stack of letters from some of the young, retarded adults who attend the Spectrum Center in Alameda. He’d recently visited the center to give a “How to ride the bus” program/demonstration, which included providing informational materials, schedules, and a popular bonus hand-out — AC Transit 20th anniversary badges. One of the letters seemed to sum up nicely the sentiments of the group:

“I thank you for telling us about the bus and showing us what makes the bus go. We liked the souvenirs you gave us. We also liked the free bus ride. I understood your safety rules. I think you are the nicest person in the world...”
East Oakland Maintenance/Stores locale gets green light

Creation of a new Central Maintenance and Stores facility in East Oakland came one step closer to completion this month with City Council approval of a use permit for the site.

The District plans to relocate Central Maintenance and the Purchasing and Stores functions to 106th Ave. and East 14th St. — site of an old General Motors assembly plant, part of which was purchased last year. Both these functions presently are at Emeryville Division.

Upon completion of the new facility, projected to cost $18 million, approximately 170 workers will be performing warehousing and maintenance chores in East Oakland. A new training facility also is planned for the site.

Drivers join Training ranks

The ranks of training instructors have been increased to 16 with the appointment of three former drivers with more than a quarter-century of combined service to bus passengers.

New appointees, according to Cecil L. Gross, chief training instructor, are Warren Miller, Yvonne Weaver, and Elbert L. Getridge. Miller joined AC Transit in 1970; Weaver, in 1976; and Getridge, in 1969.

Divisions note safety tally

Three divisions met last month’s safe-driving goal of averaging at least 13,250 miles per chargeable accident.

Again leading in the standings was Newark Division, whose fulltime drivers registered 36,543 miles per mishap. Seminary Division’s tally was 14,998 miles per accident; Emeryville Division’s average was 13,580 miles.

As a whole, District drivers (both full- and part-time) traveled 2,495,667 miles during February to serve East Bay and transbay passengers.

Bond purchase sign-up
Period starts on May 1

AC Transit’s annual U.S. savings bond sign-up period starts May 1, with information and authorization cards for purchase by payroll deduction — going out to all employees during the early part of that month.

The Series EE bond, replacing the old Series E bond which was first issued in 1941, can be purchased in denominations ranging from $50 to $10,000. Purchase price is one-half of the denomination (value at maturity). A $50 bond, for example, is purchased for $25. The bonds mature in nine years, though buyers have the option, in case of need, of cashing in the bonds six months after purchase.

Each area of the organization will have a savings bond representative to answer questions on the payroll purchase system. Handling the in-house informational program is Donn DesBoine, assistant project coordinator, General Office.
Actions of the Board

At an adjourned regular meeting February 25, the Board of Directors:
• Authorized two AC Transit representatives to attend Operations Supervisors Seminar at the Regional Transit Training Center, University of Southern California, March 1; authorized three to attend California Trial Lawyers Association seminar in Nevada March 27-29, on motion of Director Rinehart.
• Authorized Board to attend American Public Transit Association’s Conference in Sacramento April 11-16, on motion of Director Berk.
• Authorized President of the Board to travel to APTA’s Governing Task Force meeting March 8 and also attend Legislative Conference March 9-10, both in Washington, D.C., on motion of Director Bettencourt.
• Authorized travel of three staff members to Washington, D.C., to file Bus Demonstration Grant with Urban Mass Transportation Administration and to confer with UMTA officials, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
• Approved a series of service adjustments on various lines and the AC Transit-MUNI Inter-System Pass, on motion of Director Fajans.
• Authorized General Manager to negotiate contract with Sage Management Consultants for RUCUS program (Computerized Run Cutting, Scheduling and Related Integrated Management Information System), on motion of Director Fajans.
• Authorized travel of three staff members to Washington, D.C., to file Bus Demonstration Grant with Urban Mass Transportation Administration and to confer with UMTA officials, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
• Authorized drafting of letter to State Senator Nicholas Petris indicating the Board’s backing of SB-320, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
• Authorized General Manager to participate in joint procurement, with Regional Transit Association, of motor oil, lubricants, and other petroleum products; and to advertise and seek bids for purchase of brake retarders for test-use, on motion of Director Fajans.
• Authorized General Manager to declare computer card reader as surplus for sale, on motion of Director Rinehart.
• Scheduled public meeting April 29 on Draft Five-Year Plan Update; approved service changes, Lines 8, 91A, and 91B, on motion of Director Fajans.
• Authorized drafting of letter to State Senator Nicholas Petris indicating the Board’s backing of SB-320, on motion of Director Bettencourt.