Charters, tokens made news 20 years ago
I’d like to thank Ms. (Carol) Weinstein for her help in arranging a demonstration of AC Transit’s new lift-equipped buses. The driver, Mr. E.A. White, was especially helpful and courteous in demonstrating the lift features. We will include an article on this remarkable bus in the City’s next newsletter which is circulated to each household in the City.

Dan Arellano
Traffic Engineer
City of San Leandro

I wish to inform you that I feel that your bus driver on the number 12 route, Mr. Bill Damato, deserves a commendation for being one of the few bus drivers who, no matter how nasty or what hard times people give him, always has a friendly disposition. He is always friendly, polite and courteous to one and all.

I’ve been riding the bus in Oakland a great many years. I strongly feel Mr. Damato should have his picture hung as driver of the year or some other commendation should be awarded to him.

Leona Ritterband
Oakland

I have just taken early retirement after commuting via AC for 30 years from Berkeley to San Francisco. The service was excellent, and I was never in an accident and only one or two breakdowns.

I want to especially commend driver T.H. Benjamins. He is the best driver I have ridden with — always on time and no frantic lane changes. After 30 years I feel that I am an expert judge of drivers.

A. B. Herrick
Santa Rosa

I just received Volume 24, No. 1-2, July-August issue of Transit-Times and I was truly impressed with the cover. I have consistently been impressed with the publication; however, August’s exceptional performance is certainly worthy of a commendation, so to you and Transit-Times, “A tip of the hat”, and continued success.

James R. Maloney, Executive Director
Port Authority of Allegheny County
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A special commendation to the driver of the F bus this morning (L.D. Bivens). He was the most courteous and helpful driver I have encountered for a long time, but most AC drivers are very good in those respects — better by far than SF drivers!

Mrs. L.T. Campbell
La Conner, Washington

This letter will inform you of excellent job performance by one of your drivers, Mr. Claude Hawkins, Division six. Long-time observations by a Livermore/Bay Fair route customer:

Claude is always a defensive driver; his space cushion driving techniques have prevented AC accident involvements. He refused a customer twice his size bus access for lack of full fare; this customer was very aggressive, demanding and belligerent. Claude is always courteous to his customers; firm, but courteous, to his demanding customers.

T.K. Sessions
Methods Manager
Pacific Telephone

Deficit brings belt-tightening

A deficit in the current fiscal year has triggered a series of belt-tightening measures.

The clouded financial outlook stems from planned elimination of federal operating assistance accompanied by shrinking state subsidies, with the same number of public transit organizations competing for pieces of a much smaller funding “pie”. Another culprit is inflation-caused increases in costs of doing business.

Various steps are now underway to deal with this situation. An inter-departmental “Task Team” is working to identify lightly-patronized lines as potential candidates for curtailment. Simultaneously, all departments have been directed to seek out cost-saving measures.

Such steps are necessary to match operational and administrative outlay with the dollars available.

Another option under active consideration would have passengers paying a higher portion of the costs of mass transit. But even with an adjustment in fares, which may be necessary in the coming months, the anticipated losses in other operating assistance still must be offset by substantial internal economies.

Since four-fifths of the budget goes to labor costs, savings will be sought through attrition and other carefully planned internal economies. One immediate action will keep all non-essential vacancies unfilled; and all departments and employees are striving to ensure that every dollar of public transit money is wisely expended to achieve maximum effect with minimized dollar resources.

This latest update of the generally gloomy financial outlook for public service organizations is partially an outgrowth of the 1978 passage of Proposition 13 — the Jarvis-Gann Property Tax Initiative.

With the evaporation of the post-Proposition 13 state “bail-out” assistance and the anticipated dry-up of Federal financial assistance, an even more severe dollar crunch may occur in coming years, with obvious implications on fares and the level of service this District may be able to maintain on East Bay streets.

High-tech comes to fare collection

Automated fare collection and transfer issuing systems are in the immediate future for all AC Transit bus riders.

The electronic fare boxes, in test-use on buses operating out of the Richmond Division, now will be ordered for every bus in the fleet.

These fareboxes automatically count coins as they’re inserted by the rider, and they display currency and convenience tickets so the driver can verify value. Additionally, the bus driver can use registers built into the farebox to tally the various kinds of fares — transbay or local, seniors’ or youth fare — the riders on that line are paying.

This statistical information is used in planning of service adjustments.

With the cooperation of the manufacturer, a number of modifications to the design have been made which greatly enhance reliability.

The initial installation involved 250 fareboxes plus the necessary support equipment. District Directors authorized the seeking of 667 additional fare boxes at a cost of about $3 million.

In a related move, the Directors authorized solicitation of bids for automatic transfer-issuing machines, prototypes of which have been extensively tested by the District.

It is estimated that the automated system could save the District about $250,000 a year in operating costs — an amount which in about five years would cover the anticipated cost of the system.
New transfer policy, practices proposed

In a move to eliminate complication and confusion from bus transfer usage, AC Transit is proposing a change in policy which will be the subject for discussion at a November 10 Public Hearing scheduled by the Board of Directors (see accompanying box).

The proposed new policy is unchanged from the old in that transfers would still be free and would be issued on request only at the time a fare is paid. But, unlike the present system, which does not permit a “return trip” on a transfer, the new policy would impose no restriction on direction of travel. There would, however, be a one-hour time restriction on usage.

And, in another proposed change, the transfer would be surrendered to the driver of the second bus (allowing two rides only for one paid fare). Riders who regularly use more than two buses per trip would be encouraged to take advantage of one of AC Transit’s convenient-to-use Monthly Passes.

Rules regarding reciprocal (inter-

system) transfers would remain the same: transfers from other “regional transit connection” operators will be accepted when presented to an AC Transit driver for continuation of trips; conversely, AC Transit transfers will be issued, upon request, for continuation of trips.

To alert riders to the Public Hearing and to the specifics of the proposed new policy, car cards and informational flyers were placed on buses at mid-month.

The public hearing being held by AC Transit to allow passengers and the general public to comment on the proposed new rules governing transfers has been scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 7:30 p.m. at BART headquarters (above the Lake Merritt station), 800 Madison St., Oakland.

Any written comment on the proposal that’s been received has been collected and collated in recent weeks by Research & Planning Department.

Efforts continue in E/H access program

AC Transit’s elderly/handicapped access program has received local, state, national, and even international attention since its introduction in June, according to Research and Planning Department.

Among the forms that this attention has taken are requests for information about various elements of the program from transit properties and transit-related organizations, plus many requests for screenings or purchase of the driver training film “Riding Together”, which is already an award winner among industrial films and was recently singled out as a nominee for an award given by the “California Governor’s Committee for Employment of the Handicapped”.

Nominees and award winners selected by this committee previously have included such big-budget commercial productions as “Elephant Man” and “Children of a Lesser God”.

The 15-minute film was shown at this month’s American Public Transit Association meeting in Chicago. Requests for the film and/or for equipment demonstrations are received from a variety of local organizations too.

In addition, two international film crews — one British Broadcasting Corporation unit and another from a national health agency in Ireland — have traveled to the Bay Area to shoot documentary footage of accessible equipment in use on District buses.

Late September saw AC Transit’s participation — via the Regional Transit Association’s Accessibility Committee, chaired by the District’s E&H consultant, Carol Weinstein — in a workshop on wheelchair restraint devices, co-sponsored by CALTRANS.

Training of newly-hired and veteran drivers in both the mechanical operation of the lift and kneeler and in the human relations aspects of serving special-needs passengers continues. This emphasis on getting drivers confident and effective in activating access equipment takes on added significance since another delivery of equipped coaches — 12 Flyers and 60 Neoplans — is expected in April, 1982.

Research and Planning reports many examples of positive public response not only to the availability of eased-boarding access but to helpful actions and attitudes on the part of many drivers in serving new special-needs passengers.

The program has by no means been problem-free, however, and in-house priority is now centering on working out the “bugs” — equipment mal-functions, operational errors, some temporary cancellations of accessible runs. Usage figures now stand at approximately 100 lift-boardings per day and 200 requests for kneeler activation.

The retirement round-up

Employees whose service to public transportation ended with retirement in recent months include the following:

- Laurence H. Abrao, Driver, Richmond Division, 20 years.
- Karl Billingsley, Driver, Seminary Division, 20 years.
- Leslie L. Gooch, Driver, Richmond Division, 21 years.
- Gerald T. Gurschke, Driver, Richmond Division, 10 years.
- Johnny Hasty, Driver, Newark Division, 11 years.
- Robert Hensley, Dispatcher, Newark Division, 15 years.
- Abbee S. Lavalle, Maintenance (Painter), Richmond Division, 17 years.
- Glen D. Marlar, Driver, Richmond Division, 22 years.
- Lewis H. Sanchez, Driver, Seminary Division, 20 years.
- Virgil Sparks, Driver, Seminary Division, 14 years.

THE COVER — These photos were among those which appeared in the October, 1961, edition of Transit-Times — an issue which marked the first anniversary of the start of operations of the new public entity called AC Transit. The top and lower-left photos show elements of a fleet of 199 chartered coaches performing the massive logistical chore of moving some 10,000 riders to and from a huge religious rally at Golden Gate Park (the buses are lined up at left in the aerial photo). The photo at lower right marked the introduction and sale of new bus tokens. One obvious link between that first-anniversary issue and this twenty-first one is the gentleman who appears at far right in this photo. He’s William J. Bettencourt, then President of the Board of Directors, who still serves on AC Transit’s policy-making body. The two others in the photo were (left) John R. Worthington, then General Manager, and Robert M. Copeland, then Vice President of the Board.
Schedule names Boyle
To supervisor post

Claude L. Boyle

Claude L. Boyle, who joined Schedule Department in 1971 after previous service as a driver and dispatcher, has been appointed supervisor of schedules. He was promoted from senior schedule analyst.

Boyle first joined AC Transit as a driver in 1948 but left in 1951 to join the Pinole Police Department, where he completed 13 years of service. He rejoined AC Transit in 1968, serving as an Emeryville Division driver and dispatcher trainee prior to transferring to Schedule Department as a traffic checker. Subsequent advances in that department were to assistant schedule analyst, schedule analyst, and senior schedule analyst.

Boyle's family includes wife Marcie and son Gregg.

Ranks of transit retirees diminished by four deaths

Loyd G. Babo, 71, who retired in 1971 after a quarter-century of service, died September 17 in Roseville Community Hospital. He had been Emeryville Division driver at the time he retired, having begun his career in 1946 as a trainman.

Babo's home was in Daly City. No survivors are listed.

Leonard L. Culton, 68, who had been retired since 1972, died July 18 in Southern California, where his place of residence was Canyon Country. Culton had completed 31 years of service as a driver at retirement, with time off for military service during World War II.

He is survived by two children, William L. Culton, and Donna P. Brauer, and by a granddaughter, Kelly Lynch.

On-bus "eye" spots culprits

In three months of test-use AC Transit drivers have activated onboard surveillance cameras only half-a-dozen times to film the handful of violent incidents that occur on the daily total of 9,000 bus trips. But these cameras have recently proved their worth.

Early this month the District and the Oakland police, aided by television coverage, appealed for help in identifying four young toughs who were filmed while attacking a passenger in an apparent watch-stealing attempt. One surrendered, others were quickly identified.

Drivers achieve 'bogey'

All divisions met last month's safe-driving bogey — the goal of averaging at least 13,250 miles per chargeable accident.

Highest average was Newark Division's 26,956 miles per mishap, and Richmond Division was a strong second for its September average of 21,405 miles per accident. Seminary Division drivers recorded an average of 15,906 miles per accident while Emeryville's score for the month was 13,952 miles per accident.

AC Transit drivers as a whole tallied 2,689,380 service miles in September.

Committee gears up for community-giving drive

UNITED EFFORT — This year's committee of coordinators for AC Transit's in-house campaign for United Way of the Bay Area met recently to discuss plans for the two-week drive which begins November 1. Aim is to assure that all employees get information and pledge cards to aid them in planning contributions which will support scores of community-based organizations serving a vast array of human problems and needs. This year's goal-for-giving, says Ben Davis (far left), employee relations coordinator, has been set at 25% above last year's total of cash contributions and payroll-deduction pledges. Employees have the option of earmarking their contribution for any of 200 United Way organizations.
At a regular meeting September 9, the Board of Directors:
- Approved contracts to Union Oil Company and Union Chemical for furnishing lubricants in connection with Regional Transit Association joint procurement, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Adopted resolution authorizing filing of claim with Metropolitan Transportation Commission for allocation of net toll bridge revenues for Fiscal 1980-81, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Adopted resolution regarding implementation date of merit compensation system for key managers, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

At an adjourned regular meeting September 23, the Board of Directors:
- Approved sending three participants to Transit Data Summaries Group meeting in Houston October 10-12, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Awarded contract to ATE Management and Service Company, Inc., for furnishing Automatic Passenger Data Collection System and related equipment, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Approved sending one participant to Urban Mass Transportation Management Seminar in Human Resources Development at University of Pennsylvania October 12-23, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Approved new title of Safety Coordinator, updated job description, and established salary range for position previously designated Superintendent of Safety, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Approved new position of Security Coordinator and established salary range, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Authorized General Manager to advertise and solicit bids for purchase of approximately 131 buses, using “New Look” specifications, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Scheduled public hearings for November 10, 1981, on proposed new transfer policy and environmental study of Division 6 Winton Avenue site, on motion of Director Fajans.