Holiday coaches roll again

Season's Greetings
Formula for successful '84: Quality service, rider support

To all those who have helped make AC Transit a success during the last year, I would like to express my personal thanks and extend best wishes for a happy and productive 1984.

It is important, approaching the new year, to remind ourselves of the factors that make AC Transit a leader in the industry — and of what it takes to keep the District at the forefront in the future.

Our success is directly dependent on our employees — an outstanding workforce. The dedication brought to the job by the District’s workers, union and non-union, goes far to rank us among the outstanding transit systems in the country. As individuals, we must continue our commitment to provide quality service in 1984 and coming years.

Such dedication has received recognition in years past — here and across the nation. Beginning in 1984, we here at home will be paying even more attention to this vital factor through a structured Employee Recognition Program designed to provide greater public acknowledgement of the exemplary employees who keep the District moving.

The local and national respect accorded AC Transit also results from leadership provided by our Board of Directors and their resolve to address the needs of the public. Their decisions determine our direction; in charting the District’s successful course, the Board is to be commended.

Most importantly: let us remember the “Thank You” that is in order to our passengers, who, through their support of public transit, have helped maintain and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

Our riders are the reason we are here; their patronage is deserving of our sincere appreciation. And their continued patronage marks the key to our survival and success. Our future depends on our ability to provide the transportation services they need and want.

I feel very hopeful about 1984. If we rededicate ourselves to making AC Transit’s record of performance an outstanding one, our joint efforts can make 1984 an outstanding benchmark in AC Transit history.

L. A. Kimball
General Manager
Vying for contracts is key issue

Increased competition for service contracts is stimulating discussion, among both management and union, as to how best to organize and utilize District resources — equipment, facilities, and drivers — to operate economically in outlying communities.

Certain cold facts are behind AC Transit's heightened concern. Last year, in bidding to continue bus business in central Contra Costa County, the District had to bow to lower wage rates prevailing in that area. Next year, fixed-route 'Tri Delta Transit' service in eastern Contra Costa will be taken over by another contractor, again paying lower wage rates.

Will AC Transit continue to wane in all but the heavily-populated urban East Bay area? This question is of even more immediate relevance because of concern about BART Express bus contract service.

"We believe we can be competitive in contract service in the years to come — and that begins with BART Express service," says General Manager L. A. Kimball.

But, he stresses, success will be contingent upon rethinking certain concepts, including narrow job classifications and inflexible pay rates which don't recognize the difference between operating service in suburban areas and on heavily-traveled city streets.

"It's a matter of grave concern to AC Transit that we be competitive if we have to bid against others for the BART Express service contract, and that means minimizing all expenses of operating this service — particularly the cost of labor, which is the largest single expense," according to Kimball.

"What's important from our viewpoint," he added, "is establishment of internal guidelines for formulating competitive contract proposals in the years to come."

Though not matters for the bargaining table, other factors relating to the two different kinds of bus service can be expected to come under close scrutiny in coming months.

The District will continue to press for small, efficient, economical coaches better tailored to suburban usage; and it may begin rethinking the location and layout of facilities for outlying service areas — perhaps creating 'mini-divisions' from which scaled-down coaches would disperse to meet the unique schedule, ridership, and terrain demands of suburban service.

Trim-and-improve program wins praise

According to expert outside assessment, AC Transit's long, ongoing campaign to trim costs and improve productivity has paid off in the form of specific, impressive dollar figures.

A report issued recently by Deloitte Haskins & Sells, the District's independent auditors, summed up the achievement in these words:

"Increases in efficiency have allowed AC Transit to reallocate $2.5 million previously expended for administrative purposes to operations, and, additionally, they have been able to reduce the amount of federal, state, and local taxes used for operations by $5.6 million."

Specific projects cited as significant are AC Transit's new electronic fare collection equipment and computerized scheduling, claims processing, and personnel tracking systems.

Automating manual tasks brought administrative cost savings which then freed-up much needed dollars for operations. The shift to operations of some 70 former administrative/finance/personnel people is a key product of automation efforts since June, 1981.

Commenting on the laudatory 'report card', Michael H. Fajans, President of the Board of Directors, stated that the District would go forward in 1984 with a new maintenance and materials management information system.

Riders use new vehicle to communicate

Frank, fair, and concerned about their transit services, present and future.

This is the profile which seems to fit most all those AC Transit bus passengers who take the time and make the effort to communicate with the District.

Though accustomed to many telephone calls and letters — averaging some 700 per month over the last half-year — Customer Relations also processes such special incoming mail as that which is stimulated by the new passenger newsletter, which includes a pre-addressed return card by which bus-use maps, schedules, and information can be requested; general or specific complaints filed; and comments recorded.

Collecting comments

The most recent distribution of the quarterly "Passenger Lines", in October, produced a fairly typical range of returned cards. The things that were on passengers' minds included a general range of suggested route and schedule changes (always valuable input for service planners); requests for the Local Monthly Pass to be useable, with payment of added fare, for Transbay trips; interest in an AC/BART joint pass; driver commendations; and complaints ranging from being passed-up at bus stops, to commute-hour crowding, to the readability of coach head-signs; to the comfort of bus seats; to the selfishness of some fellow passengers in failing to yield designated seating to the elderly and handicapped.

Varying views

Some passenger return-card comments are swift and succinct: "Appreciate your good services..." "Maybe you can have a little cleaner buses..." "Books of $5.60 tickets for Transbay seniors going to S.F."

Some passengers attach page-length, thoughtful communications showing conscientious concern.

"First of all, do you think it would be possible for drivers to announce major stops on their routes? Some drivers do this for their blind passengers, but I think everyone benefits from this practice. Also, is there any policy on where a coach stops? Some stop out in the lane of traffic, some pull up to the curb, and some pull to the curb near the bus sign. If not, I recommend the lattermost procedure: to pull up to the curb near the bus sign. I'm sure handicapped and elderly passengers would appreciate this very much..."

Processing of these cards includes mailing specified materials, plus sending individual replies, if requested.
Fall brings harvest of drivers honored for safety milestones

"Expect the unexpected"

"Keep your mind on the job"

"You have to have patience"

JUST REWARD — Manuel P. “Paul” Mendes received his 25-Year Safe Driving Award October 31 at Newark Division, receiving congratulations from Superintendent L. L. McDonald. The native Hawaiian became a driver in 1957, transferring from Seminary to Newark 18 years later. He subscribes to the wisdom quoted above; and, with other rules of the road, it earned him the District’s 48th such award.

SAFETY FIRST — John Zorman is the first AC Transit operator to reach the 33-Year Safe Driving milestone. He reached this goal November 29, saying “I’m now working on 34!” Zorman was honored for his record-setting feat at General Office ceremonies December 14, at which time he received a commendatory resolution and plaque from the Board of Directors. In behind-the-wheel terms, his record represents having traveled more than a million miles and having carried an estimated two-and-a-half million passengers safely. Zorman became a driver in 1947, joining Seminary Division when it opened that year.

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SLICE OF LIFE — Former General Manager Robert E. Nisbet cuts a piece of cake from the specially decorated pastry prepared for his last official Board of Directors meeting at the end of October. The surprise cake-break was a gesture of informal congratulations for more than a quarter-century of service in public transit. A formal retirement event is being planned in Nisbet's honor for mid-February, commemorating his long career as a transit advocate at the local, regional, state and national levels. As the District's first employee, Nisbet compiled the Transit District Law that now is part of California's Public Utilities Code. He was Attorney for the District for many years prior to being appointed General Manager in 1978.

LIFT TEST — AC Transit's Advisory Committee on Accessibility participated in recent test of wheelchair lift — part of an ongoing evaluation. New General Manager L. A. Kimball (dark glasses) took the opportunity to meet committee members, including (lower left) Steve Herber. District buses utilize two lift models, but the test here was of equipment used on Seattle coaches.

COMMITTEE KUDOS — Loren A. Ball, transportation manager, displays award for work on a committee comprised of five transit professionals from across the country, which supplied San Francisco Municipal Railway with suggestions for improvements following a four-day evaluation. The Peer Group Accident Review Committee's recommendations included hiring, training, incentive, and discipline procedures.
Transbay Terminal

New information layout is launched

A colorful new guide to the Bay Area’s public transit systems — and to San Francisco’s cavernous Transbay Transit Terminal itself — was unveiled on the Mezzanine level of the site in mid-December. Regional Transit Association (RTA) Chairman Keith Bernard introduced the newly-installed, omnibus “Information Center” — the prototype layout in a program aimed at telling transit users how easy it is to get around the San Francisco Bay Area without a car.

The Information Center display is highly visible within the Transbay Terminal, a huge and potentially formidable landmark located at First and Mission Streets. The display contains such basics as getting around the building to use available transit systems, and this information is backed by RTA-developed signage throughout the Terminal.

The Information Center also includes detailed route maps and guides to all public transit networks in the region: the four systems serving the Terminal — AC Transit, Golden Gate Transit, SanTrans and San Francisco MUNI, plus BART, Santa Clara County Transit, the CALTRANS-operated Peninsula Train and central Contra Costa’s ‘County Connection’.

How to walk from the Terminal to MUNI Metro and BART (the latter offering transfer connections to other regional systems in outlying areas) is explained in the information installation. A stroll from the site also offers access to many popular in-city destinations — the Financial District, Union Square, Embarcadero Center, and the Moscone Center, all of which are spotlighted in a detailed downtown map.

Transit travelers will look to the information lay-out also for detailed descriptions of bus and train routes, operating hours and frequency of service, fare information, and other ‘How to ride...’ data.

AC Transit Marketing Manager Mike Mills spearheaded the project, planned as first of several. “This is an outstanding example of inter-agency coordination to encourage transit use,” said General Manager L. A. Kimball of the joint efforts of RTA, Metropolitan Transportation Commission and CALTRANS, which operates the Terminal.

THE COVER — For passengers who’ve enjoyed in past years the cheery sight of a brightly decorated bus approaching their stop, the pleasure will be double this season. Launched into regular revenue service the day after Thanksgiving were a pair of holiday-brightened buses, their clean coats of paint and holly-and-elves decor provided by Maintenance personnel, including those seen posing with their handiwork in the top photo. In addition to carrying standard loads of passengers headed for work or school or shopping, the decorated buses participated in such November civic events as Oakland’s Santa Parade and Grand Lighting Ceremony.

Volunteerism is honored

TOP VOLUNTEER — Mike Curry (right), Marketing, is congratulated on being named "Volunteer of the Year" by the American Cancer Society's Alameda County Unit. His 12 years of service have included organizing the unit's Communications Committee, and he's now in his second term as Nominating Committee Chairman.

New Employees

The retirement round-up

- Lawrence Brady, Driver, Emeryville Division, 21 years.
- Calvin Bryant, Jr., Driver, Emeryville Division, 21 years.
- Louis Jones, Driver, Seminary Division, 30 years.
- Romeo S. Marsh, Transportation Supervisor, 28 years.
- Richard P. Pracht, Driver, Emeryville Division, 21 years.
- John B. Purcell, Driver, Richmond Division, 26 years.
- Ronald S. Sunseri, Driver, Newark Division, 17 years.
- Allena M. Williams, Senior Clerk-Lead (Time-Keeping), 39 years.
- Eligie Williams, Driver, Emeryville Division, 20 years.

AC Operators Stewart and Whitehouse meet deaths in November

November was marked by the untimely deaths of two AC Transit drivers with a combined service record of nearly 30 years.

Robert L. Stewart, 41, a driver for nearly 13 years, died November 8, in Pittsburg. He worked out of Richmond Division.

Stewart, a Pittsburg resident, is survived by his widow, Juanita, and daughter, Cristina.

James J. Whitehouse, 55, a 15-year veteran behind-the-wheel, died November 13 at his home in Hayward. He was a Seminary Division driver.

Whitehouse is survived by his mother, Martha L. Doyle.

November civic events as Oakland’s Santa Parade and Grand Lighting Ceremony.
At an adjourned regular meeting October 19, the Board of Directors:

- Adopted resolution authorizing contribution of monies derived from taxes and subsidies into certain "restricted" funds; awarded contract to Alarmex for Central Facility security system; approved revised operating budget, Fiscal Year 1983-84, for Districts 1 and 2 and for contract services, on motion of Director McDonnell.

**SL/Castro Valley get new service**

San Leandro-Castro Valley benefits from this month's Line 84 re-route providing service to Eden and Laurel Grove Hospitals.

The new route operates through an area previously without transit service, and is expected to be particularly helpful to hospital patients, employees, and visitors.

COMMUNITY PROJECT — This attractive and functional bus shelter, an example of cooperation between the City of San Leandro and AC Transit was completed in late November in the Downtown Plaza Shopping Center. Built by Ronald Fisher Co., of Hayward, the structure provides protection from the elements for AC Transit patrons. The shelter was designed by members of the San Leandro City Staff.