Exemplary safety records
Earn seats at pro games
Action Agenda, '84

Dependability of AC System
Is vital to many thousands

Public transportation is a high-priority issue in our complex urban society. This fact is illustrated by the news created when, for whatever reason, any public transit system ceases to function.

A society which hopes to operate efficiently must count on moving masses of people daily on systems characterized by their dependability. People of all ages and economic levels depend on public transit services.

In providing service to our public, AC Transit has earned a reputation for being a dependable public transportation system; and it’s important to remind ourselves of the meaning of “dependable.”

The people who use our public transit service must — and do — believe that the buses will be there — when and where scheduled. They have a right to think this and we also can expect them to complain when a bus is late, or over-crowded, or dirty.

However, should the bus not arrive at all, anxiety, frustration and anger understandably become the prevailing mood. Being late to work or school, missing a long-scheduled business or medical appointment, standing at a bus stop while the minutes tick by: all of us can identify with the feelings such situations engender.

Operating a responsible, dependable transit service means ensuring that our customers can count on us; and it takes reliable employees at all levels to be sure the job gets done.

The highest praise we could possibly seek is a public declaration: “You can rely on AC Transit!”

Our ability to deliver service deserving such praise depends on each employee understanding and meeting a fundamental requirement: to be reliable. That means coming to work as scheduled, and giving the District — and our riders — our best.

The success of our System rests entirely on each individual’s recognition of his and her own responsibility to provide the dependable public service so vital in the lives of many thousands of East Bay bus riders.

L.A. Kimball
General Manager

Five-Year Plan

Service, rider, fund levels forecast

A modest investment of dollars in AC Transit service improvements could yield a sizeable increase in ridership over the next five years, and such an increase is a key objective enumerated in the latest Five-Year-Plan, introduced by General Manager L.A. Kimball during the March 7 meeting of the Board of Directors.

The draft document, prepared by Research and Planning Department, will be the subject of a public hearing April 11.

“This document is the guidebook which outlines the kind of service we will be operating in the immediate future,” Kimball told Directors. “And it includes indicators of the service we may be operating in 1989.”

Since specific elements of the Five-Year-Plan will be affected, for better or worse, by the level of funding, the draft document projects three basic possibilities: maintaining current levels of service (assuming no increase in funding); improving service to yield a projected 15 percent ridership increase over five years (assuming some budget increases); and curtailment of service by as much as 10 percent (assuming budget cuts).

“It's our hope and our intention to pursue the positive course of action,” Kimball says. “We know that modest investment of greater resources, coupled with stringent self-examination and productive internal improvements, will result in attracting more riders; and that means we’ll be doing a better job.”

In any event, the process of careful examination of existing service — the bus routes, and the number of buses operating on each route — will be a vital element in the District’s activities in the coming months and years. The aim is to maximize the utilization of buses and the effectiveness of those who drive and service them.

Trade-offs will result. For example, buses and drivers will be removed from routes where ridership is minimal and reallocated to routes and areas where demand — or potential demand — for transportation service is increasing.

The District’s 850-bus fleet probably will not increase in size, according to the plan. But it will be assigned — or reassigned — to be more productive by carrying more riders each day.

Before the Five Year projection is adopted, Directors must decide several vital policy issues. Key among these is the process by which the District examines itself. The current recommendation is for further refinement of a procedure by which AC Transit is soliciting constructive criticism and suggestions — on a route by route basis — from riders, drivers, and road supervisors.

Another key issue is funding, and the plan stresses that bus fares may have to increase, perhaps as early as next fiscal year — a decision to be made by Directors, whose responsibilities include setting the level of operational contribution made by passengers.

“This is a very sensitive point,” Kimball acknowledged. “Experience tells us that fare increases have an adverse effect on ridership.

“Yet we cannot be certain that regional sources will adequately fund future operations — at current levels — of AC Transit and the other Bay Area transportation agencies.”

One answer to this dilemma is to attract more riders, a situation which would have a very positive effect on financial prospects. The various means by which AC Transit proposes to pursue such a program are detailed in the plan, which is now available for study at locations throughout the East Bay, including District headquarters in the Latham Square Building, downtown Oakland, and at many public libraries.
Trial use will test smaller buses

Following a study by Research and Planning on deploying a fleet of smaller-sized buses to meet particular terrain, noise reduction, and ridership needs on selected routes, AC Transit will put three such buses into revenue service this summer on an experimental basis. Coaches selected for this road-test demonstration are 26-foot-long Neoplans.

Planners identified nine routes within the District as possibilities for service by scaled-down coaches. Key considerations in pointing out such routes are lower peak-load passenger numbers; terrain characterized by narrow, curving streets and/or heavily trafficked situations where maximum maneuverability is needed; neighborhoods in which complaints of bus noise and/or vibrations have been of concern; and rider-count-per-trip.

Based on the District's current route structures and service levels, planners indicated that 34 small buses could be appropriately deployed. But, the study stressed, that number could increase or decrease with future changes in ridership, route design, service area, and land use.

The disadvantages of scaled-down buses, based both on past and current experience, include higher operating costs per-seat-mile and less flexibility in assignment. In the past, the District has been a purchaser of smaller buses, such as the 25-passenger Chance Mini-Bus; and also has experimented in creating its own custom-design, such as the 13 "cutdown" coaches built for use in the since-disbanded Richmond Dial-A-Ride service.

The report points out that many more companies are now competing for smaller-capacity bus business (25 to 30-footers seating up to 30 riders) with models which are heavier-duty, promising maintenance costs closer to those of full-sized coaches.

Possibly the most visible among the current complement of small coaches are those in Oakland "Downtown Shuttle" service.

Planners recommended deploying the first of the new smaller buses from one yard only, probably Newark Division, to expedite operations, maintenance, data gathering and evaluation.

Operator, retiree meet deaths

A veteran driver and a long-time retiree died in early March.

Robert A. Lile, 54, Newark Division, died March 3 in Hayward, where he made his home. He had passed the quarter-century service mark last Fall.

Lile is survived by his widow, Velma, and children Diana, Shirley, and Kenneth.

Milton Richmond, 84, who was an assistant dispatcher, Seminary Division, at the time of his retirement in 1964, died March 7 in Oakland. His transit career had begun when he joined AC Transit's predecessor organization as a streetcar operator in 1944.

He is survived by his widow, Doskie, and children Janice L. Gruver and William O. Richmond.

Retired GM

Colleagues and associates honor Nisbet

Events honoring retired General Manager Robert E. Nisbet drew attendees connected with his long public transit career. He and wife Pat (right) are shown at the March 2 retirement dinner at the Hyatt, Oakland International, where presentations included a portrait (below), displayed by the artist, Driver Vincent Groves.

Guests included (bottom photo) Directors Michael Fajans, Roy Nakadegawa, and John McDonnell; and Risk Manager Ozro Gould. At a January luncheon hosted by Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Transit Operators Coordinating Council (middle, right) Nisbet's table colleagues included Lawrence Dahms, MTC Executive Director (far left) and Keith Bernard, BART General Manager (second from right). Dinner Photos: Ed Shelden
RIDES FOR DEMOS — Representatives from Bay Area transit systems and other agencies are meeting to anticipate added needs for transit service during the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco in July. Headed by AC Transit's Robert J. Shamoon (table, far right), assistant general manager for operations, the group represents BART, San Francisco MUNI, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, Santa Clara County Transit, and participants from CALTRANS, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Highway Patrol, and San Francisco Police. One product of the planning will be a brochure on how to reach points in the Bay Area — for business, dining, recreation, sightseeing — by transit. This is expected to be a big aid in planning side-trips and excursions (before, during, and after the event), using economical means of mobility. Initial meetings were launched during the last two months of 1983, and sessions are scheduled through convention-time.

HELPING HAND — Many AC Transit employees find off-the-job time, energy and commitment to serve the community — from Scouts to choir-singing to canvassing for a good cause. One example is Walt Montgomery, a road supervisor, who was honored last month by an award from Alameda County's Association for Retarded Citizens. Both Montgomery and his wife help the developmentally disabled in the Fremont-Newark area, for whom AC Transit provides a bus link between two different training/learning sites in the southern Alameda County service area.

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It was like searching for a needle in a haystack — looking for a 1967 50¢ piece the day after it was lost (among over 600 buses and after a holiday, no less). Yet AC Transit did it! The enclosed 50¢ is to replace the one we put in the bus box.

Mr. Lumley (Ron Lumley, Treasury) was so charming and positive and willing to help I couldn't believe it.

In an age of distrust and lackadaisicalness, it's a marvelous, uplifting experience to have met such helpful people.

Mrs. G. Brown
East Bay

The passengers of the 34C/Schedule 10 are pleased to acknowledge and commend Mr. Richard Cartwright, driver, for the performance of his duties. Mr. Cartwright is a highly dependable, reliable, safe, and courteous bus driver — qualities which cannot be said of all your drivers. He is always on time at our pick-up points and makes every possible effort to get us to our destinations in spite of auto accidents, poor driving conditions, or any traffic delays. We deem him as the ideal model for other drivers.

As most of us are working commuters, it is essential to have available to us a reliable and safe public transit service. We find that through Mr. Cartwright. We are not aware of your method of honoring your drivers. Whatever that method is, we ask that you will give him your earnest consideration for it.

Signed by 12 passengers
Castro Valley

I had occasion to ride AC Transit to the Concord BART Station with a friend who is confined to a wheelchair.

I was very impressed with the equipment on the bus and the assistance offered to us by the driver, Johnnie Grate. Even though the weather was stormy and there were many other patrons, Mr. Grate was informative and considerate to us as well as others. He was also very professional in his use of the equipment.

Thank you for providing this service to our community.

Lynne Lowrie
Antioch

On that day it was cold, and thank God the bus was on time, you know for an old woman like me don't like to wait, and it's hard to get around too. But, anyways, the bus driver, a nice, pretty young woman (Rethamae Dynes I was so helpful in getting me on the bus by lowering that machine down, the one that helps you on the bus, and she taking all that time to help me on the bus...

Imelda J. Smith
East Bay

I consider one of your women drivers, Imogene Combs, a very courteous, safe, accommodating AC Transit employee. She parks near the street curb and watches the passengers for safe exits and entrances. She is skilled and alert.

R. A. Mullen
Oakland
At a regular meeting February 8, the Board of Directors:

- Authorized travel of Security Coordinator to attend APTA Transit Security Workshop and Security Committee meeting; and travel of technician to attend Motorola Radio Course, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Approved concept of annual or biannual review of any regional transportation plan developed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Starts and Extensions Committee, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Declared support of State Assembly Bill 2337 as amended, relating to required fare box recovery ratio, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Approved agreement between the District and Local 1245, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and authorized General Manager to execute said agreement based on memo of understanding, on motion of Director Berk.

* * *

At an adjourned regular meeting February 22, the Board of Directors:

- Adopted resolution honoring Robert E. Nisbet, retired General Manager, on motion of Director Bettencourt (see photos, P. 5).
- Authorized travel of six to attend 1984 APTA Legislative Conference, on motion of Director Berk.

Meeting set for public input

AC Transit's updated Five-Year Plan, in draft form, will be discussed at a public meeting Wednesday, April 11, 7:30 p.m., in the BART Board Room, 800 Madison, Oakland (see story, pg. 3).

The document has been available for study at various East Bay libraries and at District headquarters, 508 -16th St., Oakland.