Gavel again changes hands
As Board begins new term
‘84 brought changes in key areas: Service, sites, employee programs

AC Transit made important decisions during the past year in four critical areas: service analysis and realignment, facilities improvement, inter-system coordination, and strengthening of employee programs. We expect continued emphasis on these same areas during 1985, along with intense efforts toward getting a handle on that always thorny problem: finance.

Highlights during the year were many and varied, capped by the festive celebration in October of the long-awaited opening of our new East Oakland Maintenance Center, which weds computer-age technology to a long-established program of expertise and innovation in bus repair and upkeep.

Months of intensive analysis came to fruition in September’s slate of service adjustments, which encompassed both necessary cutbacks and significant additions, including a new East Bay to Peninsula commuter route, beefed-up bus support benefiting military and civilian personnel at Treasure Island and Alameda, and some new or augmented industrial area and neighborhood service.

September provided yet another milestone: implementation, with BART, of a $10 million inter-system package of train/bus transit links, promising broader options and more efficient trip-planning to the riding public.

Since the quality and well being of its people is the very heart of any operation, AC Transit, in 1984, began the process of evaluating various employee programs. This will continue, but we’ve made a good start, including laying the framework for a more relevant Employee Recognition Plan. Also, many employees enrolled this past year in new seminars and/or longer-term study programs aimed at providing increased opportunities for career advancement. We look forward to the expanded in-house training possibilities which will follow the opening, early next year, of AC Transit’s Training & Education Center in Hayward.

Since unresolved personal problems can erode both job performance and quality of life, AC Transit acted just recently to strengthen the employee assistance and counseling program (see page 5 of this issue). I urge everyone, whatever the problem, to take advantage of the off-site professional counseling which this program affords.

As to 1985, it can be expected to present its own urgent slate of problems. I believe, however, that any such challenges are amenable to solution through our cooperative efforts, combined expertise, and plain hard work. It’s also important to keep in mind the day-to-day significance of our efforts, individual and joint, to many thousands of East Bay residents.

L.A. Kimball
General Manager

Long-time Director named President

William J. Bettencourt was chosen President of the AC Transit Board of Directors at a December 12 meeting, marking the fourth time the San Leandro resident has been elected to that key position within the System’s policy-making body.

Bettencourt, who was Vice President of the Board in 1984, was chosen by fellow directors, who also gave their endorsement to Director Linda Shepard, of Fremont, to serve as Vice President in the coming year.

Bettencourt first joined the AC Transit Board when it was formed in 1956. He is Manager, Public Relations and Marketing, for Western Title Insurance Company’s Bay Area District; and formerly headed public relations for Friden Division of the Singer Company. His civic contributions include years of service to the San Leandro Chamber of Commerce and the San Leandro Development Committee. He currently serves also as an advisory trustee for St. Rose Hospital, Hayward, and is a director of the Hanna Boys Center.

Previously, he has been executive secretary of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Francisco; director of public relations, St. Joseph’s Hospital; director of public relations, Diocese of Oakland; and director of public relations and alumni executive director, St. Mary’s College, Moraga.

William J. Bettencourt
President
Linda I. Shepard
Vice-President
Jerome G. Wiggins
New Director

Shepard, a communications consultant, was elected to the AC Transit Board in November, 1982. She is a member of the American Public Transit Association’s Legislative, Minority Affairs, and Awards Committees.

Jerome G. (‘Jerry’) Wiggins, the District’s newest Director, chosen by Ward II voters in the Nov. 6 election, represents an area including Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito, Albany, Emeryville, Kensington, and parts of Berkeley. He is a Transportation Planner with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, has served on the Berkeley Transportation Commission, and is himself a resident of Berkeley, where he received his Master’s Degree in City Planning from the University of California. He is a graduate, also, of the Institute of Transportation Management.

THE COVER — When outgoing Board President Ray Rinehart (right) turned over the gavel to his successor, William J. Bettencourt, it reprised a ritual: the new Board President and veteran Director served in the top post three times previously. Election of Board officers and swearing-in of three Board members elected in November — incumbents Rinehart and Michael Fajans, plus new Ward II Director J. G. Wiggins — occurred at a December 12 meeting.
Ceremony marks 10th Year of bus service For Fremont/Newark

On November 12, 1974, signs on the sides of buses beginning new southern Alameda County service read “A First for Fremont.” And it was. The community of 125,000 (today’s population is 143,000) was watching its first bus network provide new links — neighborhood to neighborhood, homes to shopping centers, hospital, schools and BART stations.

To commemorate the service area’s ten-year anniversary, the System recently placed new signs on coaches now serving Fremont-Newark. The banners noted that more than 20 million patrons have utilized AC Transit service there over the past decade.

The November 21 event provided a cheerful prologue to the launching of the second decade of bus service in the two communities.

AC’s colorful coaches again brighten holiday bus travel

HOLIDAY HERALD — AC Transit’s traditional buses brightened by a seasonal decor made their debut this year on November 23. Maintenance workers at Emeryville Division (shown here) sent the special coaches off into regular revenue service after putting finishing touches on their project. The System tradition dates back more than two decades.

Project will bridge pre-2000 period

The District has launched a two-phase research and evaluation project aimed at tearing through the veil of time to formulate a picture and plan of AC Transit services up to the year 2000. The document — a project of Research and Planning Department to provide a link with its series of short-term plans — will establish a framework for new transit services and facilities which may be required in meeting the coming era’s projected ridership numbers and trip patterns.

Each major corridor will be considered individually to determine level and type of service that will meet future requirements, but the broader transportation mosaic also will come under scrutiny for its efficacy in promoting region-wide accessibility.

Studies will include effects on transit services of outside factors, including these: urban growth, land-use decisions, fuel availability/cost, traffic, status of accessibility.

Employees offered professional counseling

AC Transit is now offering a newly-broadened program aimed at aiding employees who are experiencing personal problems — problems which may, or may not, be affecting job performance.

The program’s core is a network of outside counselors — Occupational Health Services, Inc. — with which the District, through the Human Resources Department, has contracted for a three-year period. Professional counseling offices are situated in a wide range of Bay Area communities, making it easy for employees to schedule sessions at locations convenient to home or work-site.

Problems which may be explored, in strict confidence, include marital and family strife, alcohol or drug dependency, emotional or financial difficulties, and stress. Depending on individual situations, these original short-term counseling sessions may lead to referral of individuals to more specialized sources of professional assistance.

The program’s philosophy is that everyone, at some point in life, faces problems which are not likely to get better, and may worsen, without outside help. In a brief message to employees in the program’s brochure (available from supervisors, department heads, or directly from the Human Resources Department), General Manager L. A. Kimball emphasizes that reality: “When you need such assistance, I sincerely hope you will call for help.”

Bus signs sell moderation

In support of Alcohol Awareness Month (December), some AC Transit buses are bearing the exterior message, “Drinking may be hazardous to your health — let’s talk about it.” Included is a hot-line telephone number, manned by volunteers ready to counsel callers. Sponsor is the Division of Alcohol Services of Alameda County’s Health Services Agency.
FOCUS: Transit People and Projects

CANADIAN COACH — Parked outside AC Transit's Oakland headquarters in late November, this Canadian-built bus elicited its share of curious stares from passers-by. Plans call for testing it in revenue service in early 1985. The Orion II, which can be built in 21-foot or 25-foot configurations, is one of several models manufactured by Orion, which, until 1977, was in the business of rebuilding and refurbishing buses. Testing such buses in revenue service is part of an ongoing AC Transit program aimed at keeping tabs on new technology.

AC employees will be focus of newsletter to bow in 1985

A quarterly newsletter exclusively for and about AC Transit employees will make its debut in early 1985. The publication is intended to fill a gap in AC Transit's publication-list: the lack of a medium through which employees regularly receive relevant and interesting job-related information; receive recognition for achievements and milestones; and get to know each other and the organization better through a variety of feature and column material.

The yet-untitled newsletter — to be produced in a four-page, tabloid-size format — will be a joint project of the Marketing and Human Resources Departments. It will complete the circle of internally-produced District publications: the monthly Transit Times, whose circulation, while including employees, is largely outside the District; two versions of a passenger newsletter, which are issued as needed; and the annual report.

Since its aim is to provide employees as varied and viable a content-list as possible, ideas for articles, columns, and photos are being solicited. Written suggestions for topics may be forwarded to the Human Resources Department, which also can be contacted by phone — 891-4799 — about the newsletter. To assure employee input, a clip-out coupon relating to content will appear in the first issue.

Wrapping up 48-year career

"Robbie" Robinson draws up new schedule — retirement

"If you're the worrying type, it would kill you fast."

That was Warren E. "Robbie" Robinson's assessment of the pressure of his job — then superintendent of schedules — in mid-1965. He was at the time nearly three decades into a transportation career which has just now ended with retirement, as transportation engineer, at the 48-year service mark.

His summation of the overall aim of the work is as timely, at this time of retirement, as it was at that earlier point: "We try to put the best product possible on the road, tailored to the best advantages of the public and the District."

Robinson's introduction to East Bay transit occurred in 1936 when he joined Key System as a mail boy. Two months later, he had moved into scheduling — his specialty from that time forward. And, pre-computer, the scheduler's task — gathering and analyzing data; mapping routes; issuing and updating public timetables; locating stops; laying out schedules and then cutting them into individual driver 'runs' — was strictly manual.

After that first move upward in 1936, Robinson assumed a variety of responsibilities within the scheduling function. In 1962 he assumed the superintendent of schedules post; then, in 1965, he was tapped to oversee Research and Planning on a two-year interim basis. Upon relinquishing that responsibility, he returned to his area of specialty with a new title — transportation engineer.

The new retiree, whose leisure interests include coins, stamps, and home handyman chores, is a long-time resident of San Leandro, where he and wife Viola reside.

W.E. "Robbie" Robinson received a retirement send-off at a November 2 luncheon (top) where, on arriving, he stood (left photo) under sign appropriate to the career wrap-up theme as he was greeted by General Manager L. A. Kimball (far right) and Robert J. Shamoon (center), assistant general manager for operations.
UMTA is 20, and dollars are at work

AC Transit joined other Bay Area operators on November 28 in proffering 20th-anniversary congratulations to the Urban Mass Transportation Administration — the federal government’s conduit for funds supporting public transit systems throughout the country.

Over the past two decades, AC Transit operations have been aided by more than $228 million in UMTA grants. That support has made possible the purchase of some 920 new buses, construction of the recently opened Central Maintenance Center, and the ongoing program of upgrading divisional operating sites, of which some examples are shown on this page.

BIRTHDAY KUDOS — Oakland ceremonies noting UMTA’s anniversary were hosted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Accepting AC Transit’s congratulations (above) from General Manager L. A. Kimball was the federal agency’s regional administrator, Bridget Hynes-Cherin. Some of the current facilities improvement projects made possible through UMTA funds are at Emeryville Division (top right) and Seminary Division (left).

Statistics give view of System’s status

AC Transit’s current statistical profile proves that it is a public transit system characterized by diversity, especially in service configuration and in passengers. Further, the figures starkly demonstrate that providing local and transbay mobility options to passengers ranging from well-to-do suburbanites to inner-city youths to fixed-income seniors is demanding — of equipment and people.

The System’s average weekday ridership of 235,000 passengers can pick and choose among 169 routes fanning out over 750 square miles of two very populous counties, Alameda and Contra Costa. The 850-bus fleet, requiring 1,450 drivers, consumes 150,000 gallons of diesel fuel each week. These drivers, who currently log some 31.5 million service miles a year, are backed by 320 maintenance specialists and by 430 clerical and management people.

The tab is $96,455,000 in operating expenses in Fiscal Year 1983-84, of which $32,866,000 is paid by passengers in the form of cash fares, tickets, transfer fees, and monthly passes. Making up the difference between fares and total outgo continues to be the District’s thorniest challenge. In Fiscal ’83-84, the dollar gap was closed by a combination of federal funding ($7,863,000), state and local sales tax revenue ($36,951,000), and property tax share ($11,835,000) — the latter being applicable only to operating expenses.

The passengers represent a broad cross-section — in age, in income, in ethnic make-up, and in what they need in transit services. Of the 82% of total passengers who use Local buses, 133,000 are adults, 60,000 are youths, and 12,000 are seniors and/or handicapped.

Youths lead in Pass growth

Sales of AC Transit monthly passes in all categories increased in October over the previous month, with a particularly significant jump — more than 27% — in number of youth passes sold.

In all, 30,398 of the District’s monthly passes were purchased in October, compared to 24,577 in September. Sales of the following types were tallied: local passes in the adult (7,938), youth (12,343), senior (4,815), and handicapped (2,167) sub-categories; and three separate transbay passes (totaling 3,135).

In addition to these AC Transit-only passes, the System cooperates with San Francisco MUNI in selling certain passes with inter-system elements. Of these, 1,681 were sold in October.

Recent deaths reduce ranks of employees and retirees

Four autumn deaths diminished the ranks of AC Transit employees and retirees.

Charles A. McAdams, 67, who had completed 37 years of transit service at the time he retired as a driver in 1983, died September 22 in Hayward. In 1982, McAdams, of Seminary Division, was honored by the District for reaching the 30-year safe driving milestone.

He is survived by a son, Charles McAdams, Jr.; and a daughter, Donna McAdams Brownly.

Wilber S. Campbell, 66, who had completed two decades of service when he retired as a Seminary Division driver in 1982, died November 8 in Martinez. He had been living in Vacaville.

Campbell is survived by his widow, Mary.

Isaiah McCoy, Jr., 32 who had joined AC Transit as a driver in 1981, died September 16 in Oakland. He worked at Seminary Division.

Survivors include his mother, Thelma W. McCoy.

Taylor E. Farrow, 57, who reached his 30th year of transit service earlier this year, died October 30 in Oakland.

The Seminary Division driver is survived by his widow, Juliette, and two daughters, Denise and Lisa.
Student letter writers
"'fess up" to their part
In bus service incident

Open lines of communication and a sincere desire to improve service and student behavior on buses now promise better relations between AC Transit and St. Michael's School in Livermore.

Students, parents and administrators complained earlier this year that an AC Transit driver had "passed up" a group of St. Michael's people waiting for a Line U-Pleasanton bus. Following AC Transit's internal inquiry, including an interview with the driver, disciplinary procedures were imposed.

Students and staff, concerned that the driver might lose his job, admitted that some pupils had contributed to the incident. Soon, a bundle of letters arrived at AC Transit's administrative offices, with sentiments such as these from fourth-grader, Corey E.:

"It was the kids' fault. He asked us to quiet down but we screamed louder. You should have told our principal to have us stay off the bus for some time."

Another fourth-grader, Carolyn G., agreed:

"The guy that you suspended, it was not his fault. It was ours for yelling. We will try to do something about it."

Maureen L. addressed the driver directly:

"I hope you can get your job back. You are very kind and loving to us."

Kelly W.'s note seemed to sum up the matter very succinctly:

"Some of the St. Michael's students don't behave properly on the bus. I hope all of us will try harder."

Many of these letters were decorated with colorful stickers of little balloons or stars. Some had art work of bears, trees, and cloud-strewn skies. Teacher Ann Spies also contributed her thoughts about securing a better relationship among all parties concerned.

The outcome:

The driver has returned to his route. Reports are that the students are behaving better. The school is pleased with the improvement. The parents are reassured of AC Transit's commitment to provide responsive service. In reply to the letters, General Manager L.A. Kimball wrote, in part:

"The class needs to know that AC Transit realizes that everyone, including bus drivers, makes mistakes; and the purpose of our corrective action was to ensure that an individual does not repeat mistakes. We value this driver's services and assure you that we expect him to continue driving and serving the people of this District."

Our 'Stockholders' Write

It was my pleasure to be riding on a 51 bus this afternoon when I witnessed a very kind and thoughtful act by the driver (Ronnie Williams).

There was a blind man riding on the bus who had told the driver he wanted to get off at the Taco Bell restaurant. When we arrived, the driver told the man that the traffic was exceptionally heavy so he would escort him across the street, which he proceeded to do.

I thought the driver should be commended for his thoughtfulness.

L. Shanis
East Bay

I wish to compliment an AC Transit driver ("Chico" Bivens).

When a driver shot across the street in front of the bus, Chico averted a dreadful accident. Thanks to him, we were not killed. The car shot through like a bullet. Chico is a top driver.

Mrs. Aetna Monahan
Fremont

I recently spent a few days in Oakland and found it to be a beautiful city. What impressed me most were your bus drivers on Routes 59 and 76. We took the bus daily from Jack London Square. Each bus driver was cheerful and pleasant, not only to us but to all the passengers who got on, many asking directions.

I feel that all the bus drivers in the country should go to Oakland and take lessons in being cheerful, helpful, pleasant from your wonderful bus drivers.

Sumiko Suzuki
Hawaii

I live in the East Bay and work in S.F., and I've had to use public transportation for the last 10 years.

I decided to give AC a try, and I have never regretted that decision. Even when the traffic on the bridge is awful, I usually make it to work on time. The service you give is dependable and reliable.

Your drivers are the best — courteous, knowledgeable about connecting bus routes, and responsible about keeping to the rules of accepting only timely transfers and not letting anybody on who doesn't pay. I like that. It makes me feel that I'm alive in a civilized part of the world where systems run smoothly and the rules are enforced.

Phyllis Wadler
Albany

I have been riding AC buses since 1951, and though there are other fine men on your staff, I feel that Mr. Al Lewis somewhat stands apart with his very pleasant and, mainly, patient attitude.

The issue was a complicated directional change which he voluntarily repeated, over and over, until I got it straight. There was no abrupt "take it or leave it" attitude on his part.

Jean Brenna
Hayward

I have found Joe Alder to be an extremely helpful and courteous driver. He is an excellent employee. He found my keys and kindly reassured me about them while performing his work well.

Claire Englander
Oakland
Actions of the Board

At an adjourned regular meeting October 24, the Board of Directors:

• Authorized travel of Board members to attend fall meeting of California Association of Publicly Owned Transit Systems, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

• Approved Human Resources Department staffing recommendations; approved schedule for implementing Merit Compensation Program; approved contracting with Occupational Health Services for employee assistance program, on motion of Director Shepard.

• Authorized General Manager to contract with TTSS, Inc., for development of automated training system, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

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At a regular meeting November 14, the Board of Directors:

• Authorized General Manager to seek consultant proposals for study and evaluation of all existing and potential major transportation corridors within Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

• Adopted Maintenance Plan as addendum to Five-Year Plan for Fiscal Years 1985-89, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

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At an adjourned regular meeting November 28, the Board of Directors:

• Adopted resolution of congratulations upon retirement of Dale W. Leuhring, General Manager, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

• Recorded support of 1985 Transportation Financing Plan proposed by Californians for Better Transportation, with specified contingency, on motion of Director Fajans.

Best Wishes for the New Year