Dolphins leave the driving to District buses
What the Press is saying about transit

The Daily Review

Transit inequity

When members of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission sit down each year to split up the Bay Area financial pie, four of the biggest transit systems get to help with the carving.

Two others — AC Transit and BART — must stand outside with noses pressed to the windows, hoping they'll get their share.

It's an injustice, a costly one that benefits other transportation systems at the expense of riders from the East Bay. And it's one that should be remedied.

At stake is the distribution of millions of dollars in state and federal funds used to operate and improve Bay Area bus and rail lines.

BART board president Arthur Shartsis, writing in behalf of AC and BART, has asked the commission to consider expanding the panel by two members.

Shartsis' request is modest: He simply wants ex-officio status for AC and BART.

We say that's not enough. It's time to change the rules either by making AC and BART full voting members or getting the representatives of all transit operators on the commission.

Quentin Kopp, chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, has no sympathy with the plight of AC Transit and BART. It's little wonder.

In addition to his MTC board membership, Kopp also happens to be a director of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, which has more than passing interest in funding of the city's public transportation system, the Muni.

Kopp is one of 18 commissioners whose job it is to determine how efficiently the transit systems are run and how deserving they are of the millions of dollars from bridge toll revenues, the state, and the federal government that are allotted each year at MTC's discretion.

In theory, the commission is comprised of officials, most of them elected, who don't have a direct stake in transit.

But Kopp and others on the panel have clear political investment in the operation of their local transit systems.

In San Francisco's case, the lines of control lead from the Muni to the city Public Utilities Commission to the Board of Supervisors, where Kopp sits as an elected member.

Similar situations exist in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, where the respective boards of supervisors oversee Santa Clara Transit and SamTrans and at the same time appoint representatives to the commission from their own ranks or of their own choosing.

Furthermore, Kopp serves as a board member of the Golden Gate Transportation, Highway and Bridge District, which runs buses and ferries into San Francisco and competes for commission funding.

So how can Kopp oppose MTC membership for transit operators? He routinely promotes the cause of San Francisco transit, yet he now flatly rejects a request to give the same opportunity to directors of AC and BART.

It's an inequality and a conflict of interest. . . .

The commission's administration committee is scheduled to discuss the issue this month. We encourage the members to take a fair-minded look. AC and BART have been relegated to the back of the bus for too long.

1985 agenda

Goals are service, support, MTC voice

Increased emphasis on customer service tops the list of objectives for AC Transit this year, according to Board President William J. Bettencourt, who placed that matter first among five aims to receive priority in 1985.

"Specifically, that sets high priority on generation of increased ridership; and to accomplish this we must maintain affordable fares, courteous and understanding employees, good on-time performance, clean and attractive buses and shelters, and aggressive research leading to route improvements," he said.

Another major objective for 1985 is to make the public — along with the officials who control the purse strings for support of public services — truly understand AC Transit's financial need.

"We have to get the message to federal and state officials; to transit industry coalitions, and to the opinion leaders in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties," he declared. "Just like the East Bay's highways and city streets, the mass transit system needs sufficient sustenance and support to meet today's demands and to build for tomorrow."

Also among the five points in the new Board President's program is increased effort to seek state legislation to enable AC Transit to enjoy equal representation on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission with CalTrans, San Francisco MUNI, Golden Gate Transit, and Santa Clara County Transit. While these participate directly or indirectly in MTC's decision-making affecting regional transit operators, AC Transit and BART are shut out.

Bettencourt named a special committee of himself, Ray Rhinehart, Director-at-Large, and Michael Fajans, Ward I Director, to work with state legislators and local officials to achieve equal MTC representation for all of the region's mass transit systems.

Networking activities to be emphasized during 1985 include special liaison committees with BART, California Association of Publicly Owned Transit Systems (CAPOTS), the Alameda County Transit Advisory Committee, the Contra Costa County Transit Advisory Committee, and Californians for Better Transportation, a recently-formed coalition of corporate and civic leaders concerned with transportation issues.

Bettencourt made special note of the fact that 1985 marks the 25th year of AC Transit operations, promising appropriate celebratory events, both in-house and within the East Bay community.

"Since we took over from a failing private operator in 1960, we've built a publicly-owned bus system that serves 38 communities in the metropolitan and suburban East Bay," said Bettencourt.

"And the political and institutional improvements we will be seeking during this anniversary year will go far to set the stage for continued service improvements in the years to come."

Bettencourt's fifth objective for the new year is to strengthen "employee pride and esprit de corps" by introducing awards and other means of recognizing exemplary service. For management and salaried employees, he noted, there will also be a new performance appraisal/merit pay system.

THE COVER - January's Super Bowl frenzy didn't faze District charters transporting the Miami Dolphins. Driver Tom Huey and Supervisor Ron Johnsen (left & center, middle photo) flanked defensive end Charles Benson, while tackle Cleveland Green and guard Jeff Teows (bottom row, center) towered over Driver Vivian Hepburn. AC Transit's candid camera also eyed coach Don Shula (far right) striding briskly for a bus while (bottom, left) defensive end Doug Betters got on board.
Divisional reorganization due in March

Sweeping organizational changes go into effect in AC Transit’s Operating Divisions and departments in March, aimed at yielding greater efficiency and productivity in the delivery of on-street service.

The reorganization approved by the Board of Directors Jan. 9 goes into effect March 10 — date of the Spring Sign-Up. Relocation of staff will take place in stages, beginning with full manning of Central Maintenance in the next few weeks, then continuing as the rebuilt Divisions come on line in 1985 and 1986. Changes will be executed with virtually no difference in total manpower.

One key move is establishment of a new Division General Superintendent position, with total responsibility for all operating functions in each of the four operating facilities: Divisions Two (Emeryville), Three (Richmond), Four (Seminary), and Six (presently in Newark, but soon relocating to Hayward).

Consolidation of Divisional administrative authority places on-site responsibility for the traditional Transportation and Maintenance activities in one office. Presently, lines of authority and responsibility for Transportation and Maintenance are separate. This reorganization will require cross-training of Transportation and Maintenance management personnel who, under the existing structure, have specialized in particular areas of expertise.

Supervision levels
The streamlined structure provides four levels of supervision in each Operating Division, a chain of command also reflected in the organizational chart for the Central Maintenance Center. The reorganization package also provides for around-the-clock supervision on all shifts assigned in each Division. Line supervisors, mid-management, and the Division General Superintendent in each facility will report directly to the Assistant General Manager for Operations, relegating the long-existing Transportation and Maintenance Manager positions to history.

Another new Maintenance classification, Position Control Supervisor, will use communication and control elements of the Maintenance and Materials Management Information Systems (MIMIS), among other tools, to plan, coordinate and direct assignments of the workers responsible for bus fleet upkeep. The changes also establish a Print Shop Supervisor position in Purchases and Stores to oversee operation of the new publishing facility at Central Maintenance Center.

Lines of authority
A clearly-defined “Maintenance” hierarchy will continue to exist in the Operating Divisions — but only from entry-level positions up to basic line supervisors. Similarly, bus drivers still will report to Dispatchers in “Transportation”. Above that level, a single chain of Assistant Superintendents, Superintendents, and Division General Superintendents will have responsibility for Maintenance and Transportation activities, including a limited number of Road Supervisors assigned to each division.

While dispatching of bus drivers from each Division will remain essentially unchanged, individual maintenance activities will now emphasize routine servicing and cleaning of buses, and limited levels of preventive upkeep. Major bus repair will be conducted at Central Maintenance Center.

Other changes in Operations will include establishment of two new support functions: the Operations Center, which will monitor and direct day-to-day activity of buses on the street; and an Operations Program and Analysis Unit, which will analyze operational activities and plan programs to yield improved efficiency and productivity.

Transit trends and topics
Will 30-Z die when grant gives out?

Can Line 30-Z be continued as a link between Martinez and the Richmond-Pinole-Hercules area after the one-year MTC demonstration grant expires on June 30?

Currently, AC Transit staff is formulating a recommendation to the Board of Directors regarding the fate of that bus route, with a final decision forthcoming in two to three months. Considering the financial picture, however, the expectation is that the District cannot assume full funding of Line 30-Z, particularly since the cross-county link is outside of AC Transit’s regular service area.

Planners are well aware, however, that service cessation would impact on a patronage consisting of regular commuters and riders with no other transit options for access to public facilities at the Contra Costa County seat, Martinez.

According to AC Transit surveys, about 60% of 30-Z’s ridership makes trips four or five times a week; and two-thirds make trips between western Contra Costa and Martinez. Since June, 1984, when AC Transit took over operation, ridership has grown to more than 200 daily passenger trips — up from the 125 daily trips logged when the System took on the MTC-funded project initiated by BART (in mid-1983) to link Martinez with BART/El Cerrito Del Norte Station.

Toward saving the service for its riders, AC Transit has initiated informal discussions with Contra Costa County officials regarding possible county contributions to funding 30-Z. Also being explored with MTC, Contra Costa Transit Authority and WestCAT are possible subsidies to underwrite the service after the one-year demonstration grant of $300,000 expires this summer.

Top workers to get new recognition

New ingredients will be added this spring to AC Transit’s existing programs for recognizing employee performance, long service, and safety milestones.

A formal Employee Recognition Program, approved by the Board of Directors January 9, will identify a “Bus Driver of the Quarter” — to be selected for exceptional achievement in service to the public. This, of course, will be in addition to a continued, enhanced “Safe Driving” awards program, which recognizes accident-avoidance accomplishments.

Special recognition for bus drivers will be based upon several factors, including safety awareness and achievement, plus any exceptional commendation voiced by peers, supervisors, and/or the public.

Quarterly honors also will go to a Maintenance worker and an employee representing other job classifications. Awards to Maintenance personnel, and to workers in clerical and administrative classifications, will recognize on-the-job accomplishments.

Quarterly award winners in each of the categories, plus any other exceptional achievers selected, will compete for annual honors recognizing AC Transit’s “Employee of the Year”. That honoree will be one who is judged as best exemplifying the outstanding among dedicated public transportation people.

Also, there will be longevity awards, recognizing continuing public service careers. In this area, beginning at ten years of service, and in five-year increments thereafter, an AC Transit pin will be awarded. Upon completion of 30 years, each veteran employee will receive an engraved wristwatch. On retirement, each employee will be the subject of a special resolution recognizing his or her outstanding contribution to transit.
Outreach efforts aid in reissue of discount fare cards

AC Transit Customer Services people have traveled to more than two dozen different locations since mid-November in a program to assist senior citizens and certified handicapped riders in renewing their discount-fare eligibility cards.

The revamped eligibility cards — now titled "Regional Transit Connection Discount Cards" — assure reduced fares on AC Transit and all other public transit systems in nine Bay Area Counties. Those qualified as card-holders are citizens 65 or older and the certified disabled.

Re-registration of all previous discount-fare recipients will continue through March 31. New cards are issued upon surrender of the old cards, while those getting a card for the first time, or securing a visitor's card, pay $2. Cards are valid for three years.

The new fare-discount cards also are being issued on-site at the District's Customer Service Center, 508-16th St., downtown Oakland.

Monthly safe-driving target to change in increments

AC Transit's monthly Safety Bogey — the statistical target in accident-free miles — will be adjusted slightly on a graduated scale in the next few months to better reflect what drivers actually achieve on a regular basis.

"The professional excellence of AC Transit drivers is such that they regularly achieve the old Safety Bogey of 13,250 average mishap-free miles a month," notes Assistant General Manager for Operations Robert J. Shammo. "In the new scheme of things, each Division will be competing with itself, and if past experience is a guide, they'll be setting new records regularly."

From January through June, 1985, each Division's average monthly goal (see chart) will show moderate increases, based on the 12-month statistics registered as of December, 1984. Beginning July 1, new Safety Bogeys will be established for each Division.

New Miles-per-Accident Monthly Targets

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Operator Denis Hrbacek dies

Denis J. Hrbacek, 50, an Emeryville Division driver with more than 18 years of transit service, died January 16. The West Pittsburg resident joined the System's driver ranks in 1966. Hrbacek is survived by his widow, Birthe, and three children: Vivian, Dean and Erik.

Death was attributed to pneumonia and occurred while he was hospitalized at Kaiser.

System vigorously seeks Applicants for operator

AC Transit buses are announcing a new driver recruitment program to be introduced in February.

The bus posters, plus detailed newspaper ads and bulletin board announcements, invite potential operators to file Applicant Information Cards with the Human Resources Department. Collected during three days at the Oakland Coliseum, these cards will be processed for an Eligibility List for new hires.

Tested and screened applicants are expected to provide a steady flow of qualified new part-time bus drivers, from whose ranks all future full-time bus driving positions will be filled.

AD AMBASSADORS — Personal views of operators are included in the current campaign for compiling a pool of qualified part-time drivers. Drivers proved to be thoughtful spokesmen about the rewards of the work, including the two at left, plus others who said, "You really learn a lot about people..." and "It's not just the money..."
Settles, Nygaard join System's management

Michal Settles, formerly with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, is AC Transit’s new training and education manager, while Diane Nygaard, previously with San Francisco Municipal Railway, has assumed the position of operations programming and analysis manager.

Settles will oversee a variety of programs designed to upgrade and improve both job skills and career potential. She earned a master’s degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she helped in planning training programs.

Superintendents enter leisure life

Two transportation veterans have retired as Division superintendents following combined transit service of nearly 70 years for AC Transit and its predecessor.

Both Leonard L. (“Mac”) McDonald and Harold L. Ellis started their East Bay transit service behind the wheel.

McDonald rejoined the Key System in 1951 after having previously worked there from 1945 through 1949. Ellis’ service started in 1953. Prior to retiring, the former was superintendent at Newark Division, while Ellis performed the same function at Seminary.

“...I am doing some traveling...”

McDonald says, “and raising some chickens on my little farm — a half-acre outside Livermore.” Sharing this new leisure life is wife Violet.

During his tenure, McDonald worked his way up from driver to instructor, supervisor, central dispatcher, and assistant superintendent. He became superintendent in 1972.

Ellis also came up through the ranks before being selected superintendent in 1983. He began his public transit service after discharge from the military at Hamilton Air Force Base.

Ellis and wife Maxine are moving from Pinole to Brookings, Oregon, where, he says, “there is great fishing.”

FOCUS: Transit People and Projects

SENIORITY TOPPER — Marjorie Ezell, who led operators in length of service, was honored January 11 at Emeryville Division. The System’s last female bus driver of the group hired during World War II to replace men who had entered the military, Ezell began her public transit service June 21, 1944. Joining to mark her retirement were three other women who entered public transit in that era.

LIFE-GIVING GIFT — AC Transit employees Jeff Allen (Research and Planning), left, and George Graner (Data Processing) were among 25 General Office employees who gave blood during a recent campaign sponsored by the District and the Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association Blood Bank. Assisting in the drive were nurses Jean Pulis (left) and Jane Adams.
Festivities cheer commuters at Transbay Terminal

HERE FOR CHEER — Carols, candy canes, and Claus (Jim McCracken, Treasury) were top-billed during the District’s December 21 holiday salute to bus commuters at San Francisco’s Transbay Terminal. That once-a-year occasion allows AC Transit employees to shed their job specialties to become musicians, singers, M.C.’s, and greeters in elf attire. This year more than 15 employees participated.

I would like to recommend Mr. C. J. Franklin as an outstanding driver. It always is a pleasure to board his bus going home after a day’s work. His friendliness makes me feel so much less tired. He is an excellent driver and goes strictly by the rules set by the company.

Another operator, Mr. Thomas Dyus, is a most outstanding young man. Most of all I respect him as a good professional driver — one who thinks quickly when there is danger.

Ida Tielenburg
San Leandro

Most of your drivers are courteous, but Faye Cooper displayed exceptional courtesy, not only to me but to all of her passengers.

I drove for the Municipal Railway 16 years ago, so I know what a tough job it is to be a transit operator. Please, if possible, initiate an “AC Driver of the Month” award; your drivers deserve little “boosters” to make their jobs easier.

Otis W. Williams
North Oakland

(Ed. Note: See story, pg. 5, about the new Employee Recognition Program.)

I am writing to note that I appreciate a driver who is making an effort to train his passengers: John Aguirre, who properly instructed a passenger that there is no “eating on the bus”.

I have ridden some buses that looked more like garbage cans.

Lena Langell
San Francisco

I was a passenger on a bus which I rode from 12th and Broadway to Mountain Boulevard in Montclair. I would like to thank the driver (Bill Dawson) for a thoroughly delightful exposure to public transportation.

Although I had no personal contact with Mr. Dawson until getting off the bus, I noticed the high quality of his interactions with a number of other passengers. Some he seemed to know rather well as regular riders, while others were strangers. Regardless, Mr. Dawson was at all times a gentleman; he answered questions clearly and directly and was obviously regarded as a good friend by some of the older riders.

This driver’s conduct exemplified a high level of professionalism, and is deserving of congratulations.

Leigh Evans
Downey, CA.

I am happy to continue to receive Transit-Times in my husband’s name, but am disappointed that nothing has been in the Times of his death on June 27, 1984.

I’m sure many of the people he worked with in the 30-some years of his dedicated service to the old Key System and AC Transit would like to know.

Estie Harriman
Vacaville

(Ed. Note: Brad Harriman had served as streetcar operator, bus driver and dispatcher before he retired from Richmond Division in 1979. We regret having failed to receive and print news of his death.)
At a regular meeting December 12, the Board of Directors:

- Elected William J. Bettencourt President and Linda Shepard Vice President, on nomination of Director McDonnell.
- Adopted resolution honoring retiring Director William E. Berk, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Adopted resolution authorizing ground lease agreement for new general office facilities, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Adopted resolutions in support of continued and enhanced federal and state transit operating assistance; authorized letter to Chairman of Metropolitan Transportation Commission requesting ex-officio MTC seats for AC Transit and BART, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Authorized General Manager to negotiate one-year contract with Richardson Security Co., Inc., on motion of Director Shepard.
- Accepted audit for Fiscal Year 1984, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Adopted resolutions relating to revenue and tax anticipation note and to lease agreements, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Awarded contract to Lathrop Construction Company for new Hayward facilities, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Adopted resolution declaring results of November 6, 1984, election of three Directors, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

At a regular meeting January 9, the Board of Directors:

- Authorized General Manager to establish four new positions within Operations and to reorganize (see story, pg. 4), on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Authorized General Manager to approve administrative procedures for Employee Recognition Program (see story, pg. 5), on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Authorized General Manager to file MTC grant application on behalf of Berkeley TRip, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Authorized General Manager to approve RTA program of projects for 1985, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.