'Bus Bridge' again aids train riders
When AC Transit rushed an additional dozen buses into service at the height of evening commute time during an emergency February 11, few riders realized it was the result of prior planning and cooperation between two public transit agencies.

In fact, some of the first BART train riders who were unloaded at the BART/South Hayward station (because a chemical leak had closed the Union City area) complained that AC Transit buses were not arriving, even though it was 5 p.m. and the peak of rush hour.

BART's first cry for help came at 4:39 p.m. when AC Transit's Central Dispatcher Dave Highman answered a call from BART Central. Highman immediately alerted AC Transit Operations personnel that it was time to launch a "Bus Bridge," the agreement between BART and AC Transit to accommodate train riders stranded in emergencies. Individual bus operating divisions inventoried available drivers and equipment. Maximum assignment of personnel and vehicles at the peak hour made circumstances doubly challenging for District employees, some of whom had been on the job since before daylight.

Within 40 minutes, the first buses were on the road to meet the problem. Coaches rolled from Newark, East Oakland and Emeryville Divisions. Simultaneously, Road Supervisor Walt Montgomery, along with Newark Transportation Superintendent Sterling Stewart, rushed out to assist operators with emergency rerouting caused by street closings, as the unidentified gas cloud drifted over the area. The 'cloud,' coincidentally, caused Highman additional problems as it moved eastward toward the Hayward and Fremont hills, closing Mission Boulevard. The link between South Hayward and Fremont was severed. Highman redirected buses on the Nimitz.

As drivers wheeled their buses through massive traffic congestion around the station, Supervisor Fred Yells directed loading of vehicles, answered questions from concerned passengers, and coordinated efforts with Hayward and BART Police. A soft winter drizzle made road conditions hazardous for Bus Bridge operators as well as drivers on their regular runs, which continued throughout the emergency. The Bus Bridge normally would have taken riders first to BART/Union City and then to BART/Fremont. The plan calls for coaches to "link" each BART station, forming a bridge along city streets and freeways paralleling the rail tracks. However, Union City Police had blocked off an area of more than two square miles in the center of the community directly around the BART station.

At 6:30 p.m., BART called Central Dispatch to report 12 buses would appear to be enough to address the need. At 6:59 p.m., BART called again to state the Bus Bridge could now operate into the Union City station, as police had lifted barricades. At 7:05 p.m., BART indicated their rail service would resume and no additional buses would be required. Joan Eichmann implemented cancellation of service, as AC Transit continued to roll for another hour-and-a-half, delivering already on-board passengers. It was not until 8:40 p.m. that the last Bus Bridge coach turned into the yard at the Emeryville Division.

During the emergency more than 1,500 train passengers had been moved, according to Gene Gardiner, Operations Center Manager. There remained, of course, paperwork; and Marketing Manager Mike Mills and Public Information Specialist Mike Curry continued to respond to media questions. AC Transit Finance Department would later determine actual costs of operations, to bill BART under the terms of the joint agreement.

Bus Bridge aids stuck BART riders

‘Privatization’ is new mandate

District Directors adopted a policy this month giving the green light to formulation of procedures and processes necessary for a new program — ‘Privatization’ — aimed at involving private sector providers in mass transportation operations which receive Federal financial assistance.

Guidelines given by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration urge public transit operators to take the following steps:

- Reach out to solicit involvement of private sector operators in the planning of services.

District Board names Gene Gardiner as new Acting General Manager

New Acting GM is
Up-from-the-ranks

The Board of Directors named Gene P. Gardiner as new Acting General Manager, beginning March 1, at its February 26 meeting. Gardiner takes over as interim chief executive officer from Nat Gage, who now returns to his former role as Assistant General Manager for Finance.

Gage served six months as Acting General Manager following the departure last August of L.A. Kimball, who had assumed the General Manager post in November, 1983.

Gardiner joined AC Transit in 1961 as a bus driver, subsequently earning promotions to increasingly responsible positions within the operating function: road supervisor, central dispatcher, and acting division superintendent. Joining Research and Planning in 1977 as a senior transportation planner, he later moved up to the post of Assistant Research and Planning Manager. He held that position until a year ago when he was appointed Operations Center Manager, to oversee day-to-day bus operations.

- Evaluate the potential for private operators to meet specific service needs without subsidy.
- Provide opportunities for the public, including potential private sector providers, to present proposals for new or restructured services.
- Compare costs of private versus public operation of services.

While urging these steps, UMTA allows that primary responsibility for establishing necessary new policies and processes toward privatization rests with the local systems and regional planning organizations.

UMTA also states that this year's annual update of AC Transit's Five Year Plan should begin to describe substantive efforts to maximize private enterprise participation in the System's activities — with a particular focus on new or expanded services, but not to the exclusion of any facet of operation.

One recent UMTA communiqué on the subject says that the Administration stresses privatization as a means of cutting the cost of public transit across the nation. According to this document, the District must develop a private sector policy and an involvement process before UMTA will fund projects in AC Transit's 1986 annual plan.

Papers filed for funding

AC Transit capital improvement projects are headed for processing as a result of public hearings held in January. Applications now on their way to federal government funding sources seek assistance to help finance the following:

- Purchase of approximately 56 new buses, plus service vehicles.
- The second phase of renovation of Richmond Division.
- Upgrade of portions of the District's computerized management information systems.

Estimated cost of these projects is $17.4 million, 80 percent of which is sought from the federal government.
Would new computerized Transbay bus schedules meet rider info need?

AC Transit's transbay bus riders checked out a prototype automated bus departure schedule display this month and most gave the test installation rave reviews.

The electronic schedule system, which employs a low cost micro-computer, was on public display test for two days at the Transbay Transit Terminal in San Francisco. It displays date, actual time of day, and the list of bus routes serving the East Bay each day from the Terminal.

Adjacent to each bus route designation, the system shows two times — departure times for the next scheduled bus and the subsequent trip. Since the computer contains an internal real-time clock, it automatically ensures that schedules shown are accurate as the day wears on.

During the two-day test, survey cards were made available to solicit riders' comments; and, predictably, the respondents were enthusiastic. "I think it's terrific," wrote one commuter. "Add more monitors — in the lobby and up on the bus deck, too," another suggested. "Very useful late at night after the ticket office closes," said another.

This prototype was the handiwork of computer whiz Marilyn Reynolds, a Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) staff member who regularly contributes to Regional Transit Association (RTA) consumer information projects.

AC Transit participated in developing the test installation, and is working with MTC and RTA to achieve two end results: to produce a refined, modestly-priced schedule display system which might be employed by Bay Area transit systems; and to formulate the software necessary to fully automate the process of keeping such bus schedule displays up to date.

Death takes 96-year-old retiree

Dash Katona, 96, who had retired more than 31 years ago from AC Transit's predecessor organization, died February 12 in Vacaville, where he made his home. He had been a Receiver in the old Seminary Division prior to his retirement in 1954 after 37 years of transit service, which had begun in 1916.

He is survived by his children, Ed Katona and Claire Schutte.

Recognition Program

District picks top employee of 1985

Herman Lawrence, AC Transit's first "Employee of the Year," received a $1,000 U.S. Savings Bond, an engraved plaque, and commendation from District Directors when he was introduced at their February 12 meeting. The selection capped the 1985 Employee Recognition Program.

In noting Lawrence's award, Board President Linda Shepard said, "Our most important resource is our employees. Herman exemplifies the high standards that AC Transit sets for itself."

Lawrence, an Emeryville Division Mechanic A, joined the District in 1979. His nomination and selection were based on job skill excellence, dependability, and attendance.

Quarterly winners in the recognition program also were honored early this month in divisional or departmental ceremonies.

Shepard's Salute — When Herman Lawrence accepted his "Employee of the Year" plaque from Board President Linda Shepard (right), he was cheered on by wife Sheila, herself an AC Transit driver.

Quartely Champs — Newark Division's Rick Viera (right) is congratulated by Acting General Manager Nat Gage, February 5, for being 1985's final Driver of the Quarter. East Oakland Division produced two winners (above, left and center) — Adriana Moneria, Mechanic of the Quarter, and Dispatcher Don Hopkins, Clerical Employee of the Quarter, who were introduced by George Grandison, general superintendent. John Ting (above right), Finance, received the news that he was Non-Union Employee of the Quarter from JoAnn Tucker, payroll supervisor.

Operation 'Access'

Members of AC Transit's Advisory Committee on Accessibility, including (center) Michael Pachovas, Berkeley Commissioner on Disability, tried out the passenger lift on the small Neoplan bus early in February as Operations Center Manager Gene Gardiner (back to camera) and Acting General Manager Nat Gage observed the testing. Evaluation centered on passenger lift platform length — determining if sufficient space has been provided to accommodate wheelchairs safely. The committee recommended extending the existing platform length.
HISTORY SALUTE - AC Transit officially noted Black History Month with published comments (at right) of Board President Linda Shepard underscoring the primary focus her program for 1986: maximizing the potential of the District's human resources. Over the Directors' names, the advertisement states: "We believe that continued community involvement helps to develop our single most important resource: people — people who ride our buses, people who operate our buses, and the public who supports our service." This acknowledgment of the contributions of all segments of the District's culturally and ethnically diverse peoples appeared in February in editions of selected East Bay newspapers.

AC Transit proudly acknowledges the continuing contributions of the ethnically and culturally diverse people of the East Bay and of the nation. Black History Month recognizes the achievements of this group within our community and the multi-ethnic strength of our entire nation. AC Transit cares about the community of which we are an integral part, and we appreciate the support the East Bay has given us over our 25-year history. We believe that continued community involvement helps to develop our single most important resource: people — people who ride our buses, people who operate our buses, and the public who supports our service.

AC Transit Salutes Black History Month. Linda Shepard

Going your way for 25 years.

IN-HOUSE DISPLAY - In addition to ads in East Bay publications, the District noted Black History Month with a display at Richmond Division, of drawings by Vincent Groves (mail clerk, Treasury) of such famed figures, past and present, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Paul Robeson, and Malcolm X.

Our Stockholders Write

I have been riding with AC Transit since 1982, and I am very impressed with this transit district compared to others in other cities. Everywhere I go I know I can count on the bus to get me there.

One driver that stands out is John Cartwright. Ever since I've been riding the bus in Oakland, John has always greeted his passengers and treated them as people rather than another rider that he can count on his farebox. John takes pride in his work and gives everyone respect. He is well known in the community.

I hope all your operators follow John's courtesy when driving.

William D. Gorman
Oakland

This is just a brief note to tell you what a wonderful job your AC Transit driver, Lester Dixon, did with our Tiny Tots Christmas bus tours. He was excellent.

I was in charge of songs and merriment on the bus; and he participated, with glee, in all our activities. I hope to work with him again next year. You are to be commended for your splendid selection of such a responsible, capable, and affable young man.

Kathy Myers
Richmond Recreation & Parks Department

Ed Westcott has demonstrated that it is possible to get me to work on time with an absolute minimum of hassle. He is courteous and considerate of all who treat him with respect.

Good job, and I wish all drivers were like him.

Marsha Razo
Antioch

The staff and workers of the Association for Retarded Citizens join me in a sincere thank you to your dedicated staff who visited our workshop during the holidays.

Kerry Hall, Director
Fremont

Recently we had the good fortune to have for several weeks a driver of exceptional courtesy and skill on the T-3 bus from the Naval Air Station, Alameda. He was Poorn Wong.

Peter Garland
San Francisco
At an adjourned regular meeting January 22, the Board of Directors:
- Adopted resolution on the first observance of the federal holiday honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Authorized Acting General Manager to negotiate and execute agreement with the Institute of Transportation Studies for systems analysis project; and authorized entering into agreement with Muratore Corporation for renovation of the Transbay Ticket Office, on motion of Director Wiggins.

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At a regular meeting February 12, the Board of Directors:
- Authorized travel of Acting General Manager and District Secretary to attend APTA Legislative Conference March 9-11 in Washington, D.C., on motion of Director Rinehart.