Competitors sharpen Roadeo skills
Transit trends and topics

New casual carpool mode is costly

The majority of riders engaged in so-called casual carpools say AC Transit buses are their second choice for transportation to San Francisco on weekday mornings, according to research reported to the Board of Directors this month. These casual carpoolers also say that transbay bus service is their first choice for the homework-bound commute each afternoon.

AC Transit's interest in the phenomenon results from the motorists' practice of using transbay bus stops for carpooling purposes — resulting in a hazardous mix of buses, cars and pedestrians at the stops, plus a substantial loss of morning patronage on many routes. Therefore, the District engaged an independent research firm to undertake an objective survey of casual carpooling — the practice of picking up sufficient passengers to gain lawful access to the three-occupant-per-vehicle carpool approaches to the Bay Bridge.

One result of this shift of hundreds of riders from high occupancy buses to lower capacity automobiles, the researchers state, is a farebox loss conservatively estimated at $2,400 each business day — or about $600,000 a year. And, they note, added to the revenue drain are out-of-pocket operating costs caused by the substantial imbalance in morning and afternoon service requirements, which complicates the task of assigning buses and drivers.

Who are casual carpooler riders? The survey found that 52 percent are women. More than 44 percent are in their 30s; 32 percent, in their 20s; and 23 percent, 40 or older. They are generally white collar workers, such as attorneys, engineers, computer programmers, managers/executives, accountants, secretaries and clerks.

The report states that 75 percent of riders carpool four or five days a week, most often to the Transbay Transit Terminal or the nearby Financial District. More than 50 percent say they formerly were bus riders, and 45 percent say they take buses in the morning when they're not looking for a carpool ride. Fully 77 percent of these carpool passengers acknowledge that they use AC Transit bus service to get home.

The carpool drivers seem to parallel the riders' characteristics in most respects — except that a majority are men. Nearly 65 percent of the drivers said they carpool virtually every day. About half said they drove regularly before beginning the practice of giving lifts to carpoolers.

Why do riders participate in casual carpooling? According to the study, the drivers are motivated by time savings at the Toll Plaza — avoiding 10 to 20 minute waits by using the toll-free lanes — plus saving 75 cents per trip.

The study suggests that the practice is widespread, that it's likely to increase in the future, and that it has a high level of support — even from carpool adherents who say they also wholeheartedly support public transportation. It also concludes that creation of disincentives to discourage carpooling would be difficult, at best.

However, the researchers told the Directors, AC Transit does have at least one means of mitigating its revenue-draining impacts. One possibility: creating a peak-hour differential that, in effect, places a premium on the service.

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Revenues and Remedies

Recent actions geared to increasing revenues and reducing costs include:

- A July 1 increase in all categories of fares and fees for local and intercity express bus service, and an increase in rates for Line T trips between Treasure Island and the metropolitan East Bay — which are expected to generate an additional $2 million in revenues. (Transbay fares were raised last January 1.)
- Decision by Directors this month to eliminate (in the September Sign-Up) three lightly-patronized bus routes, Line B2-Trestle Glen-BART/19th St., Line K2-Havenscourt-BART/Fruitvale and Line 62-Alameda-BART/Lake Merritt; and to reduce Line 10, commute-hour service linking El Cerrito BART stations with west Richmond's industrial area to 30 minute frequencies (from 15).
- Decision by management to reduce the employee work force, particularly in departments which support operations but are not directly involved in putting bus service on the street.
- Successful negotiation of an interagency agreement which produced some $6 million in additional revenues for AC Transit.
- Continuing strict controls over all internal expenditures.

The activities sufficed to offset most of the $11 million shortfall anticipated early in the month. Such budget-balancing actions have become an annual requirement at AC Transit since 1978, when passage of Proposition 13 slashed the property taxes on which the District had relied for support.

Other Budget Factors

Even before the governor's action was announced, the District was committed to continuing vigorous budget-balancing efforts into the new fiscal year. The added need to economize results from prudent business concern about factors such as potential price increases for fuel, materials and services, and the skyrocketing costs of liability insurance.

"Each year Bay Area residents continue to rate transportation challenges a top priority," the Board President noted. "This year, concerned East Bay citizens are working to hammer out transportation financing proposals that could provide considerable assistance to AC Transit and other transportation systems and services for years to come.

"But in this current financial climate, the state's action simply compounds this District's long-standing challenge — how to survive the continued erosion of revenue while maintaining effective levels of transit service."
Bus maintenance

Program aim: state-of-art training

Development of a sweeping maintenance training program that will surpass all previous AC Transit activities teaching the art of bus servicing/repair is scheduled to begin in July.

For the next year and a half, says Director of Administration Michael Settles, Training and Education Center staff will work with two major consultants to develop this comprehensive program: the Universal Technical Institute (UTI), a Phoenix-based industrial education firm, and Sierra Detroit Diesel Allison (DDA), of Berkeley.

In the initial phase, the educators will assess skill levels of current District maintenance personnel and collect their comments and suggestions regarding both current bus up-keep activities and perceived training needs. The educational experts will use this input to tailor the instructor lesson plans and the technical guides and textbooks.

Chief among the products expected, says Settles, is a long list of training aids to be provided by both UTI and DDA. These include “cut-away” components — allowing trainees to see the internal workings of engines and brake systems. The consultants will manufacture demonstration training boards — classroom tools designed to give a visible reality to complex systems, such as the air brakes, and to concepts like electrical current flow. Additionally, they will provide an extensive array of specialized tools and training literature of the type recommended by experts to improve trainees’ level of efficiency in all facets of bus and bus-component maintenance.

In about 18 months, the consultants will turn over to the Training and Education Center a complete program, including all the hands-on aids and materials, texts and technical manuals, and instructor guides. They will provide valuable technical assistance in establishing guidelines for determining the extent of future training and retraining cycles, and for selecting and training tomorrow’s maintenance instructors.

Initially, this comprehensive maintenance training will be made available to mechanics and to service employees eligible for promotion, according to Settles. Subjects will include:

- Diesel Engine Maintenance — problem diagnosis, as well as the service and repair procedures required to teardown, inspect, and rebuild the various engines used in the fleet. (DDA adds considerable expertise to teaching bus engine and transmission up-keep, since its products are currently in use in many District coaches.)
- Subsystem Maintenance — taking care of coach transmissions; electrical systems and batteries; fuel, induction and exhaust systems; air-brake, and suspension and chassis components; hydraulic systems; and coach heating and ventilating systems.
- Preventive Maintenance — with an emphasis on teaching fundamentals of coach inspection and servicing that contribute to extending the useful life of machinery.

How are transit women doing?

AC Transit District voters will be asked to select among candidates for four Board of Directors positions in conjunction with the November 4 General Election. Candidates for one At-Large directorship, plus the Ward III, IV, and V seats have until August 8 to circulate and file completed nomination papers with the Registrar of Voters.

Ward III’s constituency consists of Alameda and Piedmont residents, plus those who live in certain sections of Oakland. Ward IV voters will be choosing a Director to represent San Leandro, parts of Oakland and Hayward, plus certain Alameda County unincorporated areas. The Ward V directorship represents the interests of residents of Fremont and Newark, plus a section of Hayward, and certain unincorporated areas.

Incumbents are John McDonnell, Ward III; William Bettenour, Ward IV; Linda Shepard, Ward V; and Director-at-Large Roy Nakadegawa.

Seminar opens doors To serving or selling To transit industry

In mid-June, District participants in a Regional Transit Association Disadvantaged Business Enterprise seminar (the fifth annual event, this one titled “From Surviving to Thriving Business”) brought expertise and insights to the subject of affording minority- and women-owned businesses an opportunity to sell products and services to public mass transportation agencies.

Board posts to be filled

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Three retirees meet deaths

Charles R. Bosted, Jr., 74, who was tops in seniority among District drivers when he retired in 1978 after 41 years of service, died June 1 in Oakland. He had achieved the added distinction, in 1974, of being the first AC Transit driver to earn the 25-year safe driving award. Bosted’s earlier transit career had included working the streetcar lines.

He is survived by his widow, Maxine, and daughter, Patricia Vaughn. He lived in Alameda.

Pete H. Paulson, 74, who was a Mechanic A in Emeryville Division’s unit room when he retired in 1969 after 24 years of service, died June 3 in Jacksonville, Ore., where he made his home.

He is survived by his widow, Minnie. Opal Claycamp, 64, who was a Seminary (East Oakland) Division driver when she retired in 1981 after 26 years of service, died May 19. She had been living in La Jolla.

Survivors include a sister, Betty Miller.
FOCUS: Transit People and Projects

SHARING INFO — AC Transit Director Roy Nakadegawa shared information on public transit policies and problems with 18 visitors from Japan recently. Nakadegawa, who also assisted the touring transit specialists in finding their way around the Bay Area, answered questions on District matters ranging from finding new funding sources to the worrisome effects of casual carpooling.

LIFE SAVER — Maryann Constable, Schedules, (below) was one of about 24 General Office employees to donate blood on June 19 to the Blood Bank of Alameda-Contra Costa. Nurse Jane Adams (right) assisted District donors recruited by Personnel.

WAY TO GO — Gloria Gaines, Personnel, one of many who helped with the past charitable campaign, displays District’s letter of thanks from Samuel H. Armacost, chief executive officer, Bank of America, chairperson of United Way for the year.

Our ‘Stockholders’ Write

When my 17-year-old daughter returned home one night, her car’s left door was damaged from the impact of her collision with an AC Transit bus. From all appearances and accounts, she had made a sudden lane change and impeded the progress of the bus. Obviously, the bus could not avoid the collision.

To hear my daughter tell the story, the bus driver, Charles Thomas, acted in an exemplary, professional, courteous, and sincerely concerned manner. His conduct reassured and calmed her in this time of major upset for her — her first accident.

I commend Mr. Thomas and wish to see that he is acknowledged for setting a positive example of humane and responsible conduct. My daughter came away from the experience with many good lessons learned.

I was similarly impressed with the courtesy and professionalism of Mr. Gordon Dupree, Jr., the claims adjustor with whom I was privileged to resolve the incident.

You’ve got some really good people working for AC Transit.

Harry Meekma
Newark

I rode home from Berkeley on a 15 bus, and during the course of that long ride couldn’t help but notice the courtesy, good humor, and efficiency of the driver; and this is something I very definitely want to bring to your attention. His name is Arthur Hill.

Sometimes, travel on the buses is extremely problematic. It is a pleasure to have occasion to write a letter like this one.

Sandra Wallace
Oakland

I experienced the most helpful, pretty young lady bus driver yesterday, going to Hilltop. I am elderly, and I needed help — how to get to a place in El Sobrante. She was a careful, confident, cautious driver, and took time to explain to me.

I secured her name: Prentis Alexander.

Della Allen
Richmond

If all the bus drivers were like him, (Mickie Jefferson) we, as commuters, would have nice days at work from the start.

Tonya Jarvis
Oakland

We have gone on the bus six round-trips. To the airport, San Francisco, “The Nutcracker”, Mother’s Cookies, Crab Cove, Chabot Planetarium.

Every time we go on the bus, there is a lot of room and nice bus drivers. So we just want to tell you we appreciate it.

Otis School/Room 24
Lynn Groh’s class
Alameda

Teacher’s Note: Thank you for your cooperation and the drivers (Routes 79, 51, 61).
Actions of the Board

At a regular meeting May 14, the Board of Directors:
- Awarded bid for furnishing service trucks to GMC Oakland Truck Center, subject to compliance with specifications and bid documents, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Adopted schedule of Local fare adjustments to take effect July 1, on motion of Director Wiggins.

At an adjourned regular meeting May 29, the Board of Directors:
- Authorized travel of District’s Chief of Security to APTA Transit Security Workshop June 18-20 in Vancouver, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Endorsed California Senate Bill 878, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Awarded bid for furnishing lift-equipped passenger vans to Contempo Coach Sales, on motion of Director Fajans.
- Authorized Acting General Manager to become Transit Development Corporation Board member and to attend TDC Board Meeting June 4 in Miami, Florida, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Approved service, through September 1, to certain East Bay Regional Parks, in cooperation with Park District, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Authorized Acting General Manager to join with Regional Transit Association in an Automated DBE/WBE Management Information System, seeking UMTA funds for the project, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Authorized Acting General Manager to extend Line 30-Z agreement between the District and Western Contra Costa Transit Authority for a one-year period, on motion of Director Wiggins.
- Authorized Acting General Manager to extend paratransit subsidy agreement with City of Fremont for a three-year period, on motion of Director Wiggins.

At a regular meeting June 11, the Board of Directors:
- Adopted resolution noting election on Tuesday, November 4, to choose four District directors, concurrent with the general election, on motion of Director Wiggins (see story, Pg. 5).
- Authorized Acting General Manager to award contract to Motorola Communications and Electronics, Inc., for upgrading the District’s microwave system, on motion of Director Wiggins.