Oakland's Broadway, 1886: From horse power to cable car

Would today's Broadway benefit from transit re-routing?
Transit trends and topics

Broadway: changing with time and transit

In 1967, when BART's downtown Oakland construction program, including the building of the 12th and 19th Street stations, necessitated a massive shift of AC Transit's northbound buses from Broadway to Franklin, the historic nature of the event was duly noted. It marked the first time in over 100 years that major transportation carriers — beginning with horse-drawn cars in 1869 and continuing to the contemporary era of diesel buses — had not traveled northward along Broadway.

And even before the advent of those horse-cars, the importance of Broadway as an urban thoroughfare was well established. According to an Alameda County history published in 1914, "In 1865 the first macadamizing was done on Broadway between Fourth and Tenth streets. It was an experiment, but the sand had become intolerable and the people were ready for any expedient that would improve street travel and conditions."

By 1871, Oakland — and Broadway's stock had risen to the point where more extensive street improvements were required — to secure "the prestige of Broadway as the most important thoroughfare in Oakland," which was, the turn-of-the-century historian noted, "fast becoming a city capable of sustaining the very best class of stores . . ."

That same theme — progress tied to efficient movement of people and vehicles — has continued to apply over the years. In the view of Harre Demoro, a Bay Area writer whose specialty is regional transit history, "Oakland was destined to grow, and grow it did. Public transportation was the catalyst that brought the East Bay the economic life it needed to prosper."

Horse power (of the four-legged variety) . . . cable power . . . electrical power . . . diesel power. In the course of more than a century, Oakland's historic Broadway has adapted to them all. As this century nears its end, District planners and city officials (see Page 3) are taking a close look at the street's current transit and traffic patterns in relation to projected pressures on it and other key downtown Oakland thoroughfares by the year 2000.

Pedestrians, a trolley, and a horse cart: this era's 14th and Broadway looked peaceful.

1906: electric era

New era, new plans

Should buses skirt core area?

Relocating some of the AC Transit routes that now serve stops at or very near 14th and Broadway in downtown Oakland is a possibility recommended in at least two separate studies of transportation within the city center area, according to a report received by the Board of Directors early in July.

AC Transit planners, working with city officials and an ad hoc business and citizen group, are refining a slate of proposals which are reminiscent of mass transportation designs a generation ago when bus service was more dispersed around the city's downtown core.

Of the two dozen local and express bus routes currently serving the historic 14th and Broadway transfer point, the studies indicate that several could be rerouted in coming months to provide for better flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and for more efficient public transit travel patterns.

Research and Planning Manager Donald S. Larson told Directors that the basic idea is to spread transfer points to several City Center sites, most within two or three blocks of 14th and Broadway. This would give downtown-bound riders direct service to City Center while reducing congestion where routes presently meet. Riders seeking to make transfer connections would not be seriously inconvenienced since bus routes would still meet in downtown — though not necessarily at 14th and Broadway.

However, the concepts generated thus far would require some restructuring of street geometry and traffic patterns — two of the factors which led to establishment of the current bus route configuration. For example, transit can no longer get across downtown — as once was routinely possible — via 12th Street, which is now closed between Broadway and Clay. But support is growing to reopen that thoroughfare, creating a cross-town couplet, with 11th Street, of one-way arterials that could help relieve traffic on 14th.

Shifting faster express bus routes (and perhaps some local lines) to Franklin Street could ease traffic on Broadway, but this would require opening Franklin — now a one-way street — to two-way bus traffic.

As an added benefit, restructuring downtown bus travel patterns could make user (Continued on page 8)
Key commute routes: now and future

The heavily-congested Bay Bridge commute corridor has been identified by independent consultants as a top-priority prospect for major transit development by the turn of the century.

The Directors were told that current transportation modes in the Bay Bridge corridor (including buses and BART) serve very heavy demand — more than 200,000 daily passenger trips — yet congestion remains severe with continued high auto usage.

Similar conditions prevail in corridors paralleling the major interstate highways in the East Bay. Although Interstate 80 and 880 have been identified for substantial improvement, observers agree that vehicular traffic will still increase enough to keep both congested during commute periods.

According to the report received by the Board of Directors in July, the comprehensive study began with initial appraisal of more than two dozen major metropolitan and suburban travel corridors. After weighing several factors, the consultants — Cambridge Systematics — narrowed the list to three targets for further in-depth analysis:

- The Bay Bridge link between the metropolitan East Bay and San Francisco.
- Interstate 80, from the Bay Bridge to the Carquinez Straits.
- Interstate 880, from Oakland to Warm Springs, near Milpitas.

The consultants suggest that AC Transit could help meet future demand by instituting mitigating measures, including service additions and improvements. However, the District’s ability to do so may be constrained, both by financial shortfalls and by interagency concerns about the relationship between bus and rail transit. The study clearly indicates that both modes will be needed to meet future travel demand, transbay, and in the metropolitan East Bay.

According to Don Larson, research and planning manager, the next step in the planning process is a detailed analysis determining with precision the role AC Transit should play within the Bay Bridge corridor. This phase, scheduled to begin this summer, will establish the manner and extent of the District’s future involvement in the multimodel transbay transportation mix.

At the same time, Larson notes, refinement of the long-range “2000 Transit Plan” will continue, yielding a draft of Development Guidelines in the next few months. Then, input from community forums will be sought to assist Directors in formulating long-range strategic policies to guide planning of future service development.

Board approves ’86-’87 budget with $2.2 million deficit

A Fiscal 1986-87 operating budget of $113 million — which includes a deficit of some $2.2 million more than total projected revenues — gained District Directors' official approval during a July 9 Board meeting.

Board President Linda Shepard notes that the deficit budget will be subject to “considerable refinement” in the next few months. Factors which could change the bottom line include possible service adjustments or curtailments and any associated changes in work force, plus the budgetary impact of the collective bargaining agreement now being negotiated.

In June, after months of aggressive moves geared to increasing revenues and minimizing costs, the System expected to enter the current fiscal year with a deficit of less than $1 million. Then the governor axed the State Transit Assistance program AC Transit had been counting on for $1.4 million.

“We take action on a deficit budget at this time out of necessity,” the Board President noted. “But this budget will be subjected to careful review and revision, and the Acting General Manager will be formulating the decisions and adjustments necessary to bring it into balance.”

Road champs caps event

Newark Division’s Rick Vieira was first in the July 19 Bus Roadeo, taking honors, as he did last year, plus a $250 savings bond. William Gamlen, also Newark, earned second-place and a $200 bond. East Oakland Division’s Michael Zipser, third, received a $150 bond. This “official” Roadeo followed a July 12, first-ever “open” competition which earned driving skills recognition for Louella Delaney, John Eversole, and Ronald Walker. A festive Open House for District employees, families, and guests accompanied the tests of driving skills and knowledge.

Who’s up next?
"Privatization," a word currently in vogue in the nation’s Capitol, was the focus of discussion at the American Public Transit Association’s Human Resources Committee, which convened at Oakland’s Hyatt Regency Hotel July 21 and 22. Some 100 personnel and affirmative action professionals participated in the conference, hosted by AC Transit, which examined the impact privatization could have on human resource programs and practices in public transit.

One keynote speaker was Keith Curry, Urban Mass Transportation Administration’s special assistant for Public and Private Sector Liaison, who voiced the administration's message. The private sector participation policy is designed, he said, to promote competition between public and private providers in the interest of economy and efficiency.

According to Curry, UMTA has seen impressive, innovative, creative responses developed by some transit systems. And, he said, in the coming months UMTA “will be most interested in observing how these policies and procedures translate themselves into actual opportunities for competitively-based services”.

Not all conference participants were in agreement with UMTA’s interpretation of privatization’s potential effects. Gerald Haugh, general manager of the San Mateo Transit District (which maintains substantial contracts with private providers) believes the human dimension of the policy requires careful evaluation.

“We may give away our best route or our worst routes, but that involves more than schedules and routing,” Haugh told the attendees. “(Privatization) involves the industry’s human resources, and jobs.”

Lawmaker Elihu Harris (Dem-Oakland), a member of the California State Assembly Transportation Committee, also voiced misgivings about the impact privatization could have on mass transit. Harris urged conference participants to continue placing top priority on cost-effective, efficient programs to address needs of transit patrons — particularly urban riders.

AC Transit Board President Linda Shepard, who serves as APTA Vice President-Human Resources, noted: “The activity the government labels ‘privatization’ is nothing new, though now it appears to be something of a federal priority.”

Other participants also affirmed that many public transit agencies have long histories of involving the private-sector in the provision of services and supplies. Ray Antonio, chairman of the Coordinating Council of Bay Area Transit Unions, cited a list of such agencies in the San Francisco region, which includes (in addition to San Mateo Transit) AC Transit, BART, and San Francisco MUNI.

On hand to relate personal experiences as private sector providers of transit or transit-related services were Josie Richardson, president of the Oakland-based company that (among other activities) provides security services for AC Transit; and Tim Collins, general manager of Transit Contractors, Long Beach, which operates transportation serving various locales.

Shepard stated that “the government’s newly-stated emphasis on this policy will have major impact on labor relations, personnel administration, training, and our efforts to increase ties with minority- and women-owned businesses.”

“These are pivotal concerns of the industry’s human resources programs, which is why the Committee places such high priority on efforts to help personnel professionals deal with the privatization policy.”

During the conference, various committees formed to address privatization’s potential impacts on recruitment activities, employment needs-assessments, training programs, and DBE/WBE outreach.

The conference also heard from Robert Owens, director of UMTA’s Office of Civil Rights, who released a newly-compiled list of human resources projects for 1981 to 1986. Owens recommended the publication, available from his office, as a guide to types of proposals receiving UMTA funding.

More information about the Committee’s activities, and copies of conference reports are available from Mel Howard, APTA’s Director-Human Resources, who can be reached by calling (202) 828-2875.

CONFERENCE KEYNOTERS — Keith Curry (above), regional UMTA special assistant for Public and Private Sector Liaison, voiced administration privatization policy. Board President Linda Shepard, pictured with Acting General Manager Gene Gardiner (above left), was conference host. She is APTA’s Vice President-Human Resources. Speakers included (at left) Assemblyman Elihu Harris (D-Oakland), flanked by BART Directors Margaret Pryor and Wilfred Ussery.
Would altered traffic flow aid downtown?

(Continued from Pg. 3)

information materials (as well as the route structure) more easily understood. Carefully planned separation of routes, by even one block, could make it easier for riders to identify stops for coaches going to specific destinations.

According to Larson, the basic rerouting concepts are consistent with many of the objectives identified in a larger Central District Development Plan (CDDP), undertaken by the City of Oakland in concert with AC Transit, BART, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and the Oakland Chamber of Commerce. The broader study calls for achieving significant growth in the central city district through a program of balanced transit and traffic improvements.

Its proposals would not preclude other possibilities for improving mobility along Broadway and the City Center in general. One such possibility, backed by a group of Jack London Square merchants, is a trolley along Broadway, wedded a proven, modern light rail technology to a bygone era’s mode of mobility (see Page 2).

As to proposals in the two reports, details require further refinement before a completed package can be placed by the District on a public hearing agenda. Presently, there are only plans to solicit public input on the route restructuring idea during a hearing later this summer.

FOCUS: Transit People and Projects

MOVING UP — These six newcomers to the position of transportation supervisor have joined the ranks of District employees who serve in bus transit’s front lines — on the road and on the street — to help keep day-to-day operations running smoothly. They are (left to right) Gary Brazil, former East Oakland Division driver; Cheryl Washington, moving up the ladder of responsibility from Emeryville Division driver; Gwendolyn Hale, another former Emeryville driver; Bonnie Nichol, who was previously a division senior clerk in Operations; Russell Dibble, former dispatcher at East Oakland Division; and Maurice Bircher, promoted from driver, East Oakland. The District’s on-the-scene link with drivers, passengers, and the public, road supervisors (as they are more commonly called) fulfill a key operational function.

FAREWELL RIDE — Veteran commuter Lois Catano (center) recently received surprise gifts and congratulations from fellow Line 36 passengers during her pre-retirement ride from Oakland to her home in San Leandro. An insurance broker with Putnam, Knudsen and Wieking, Catano has used AC Transit (and predecessor) bus service for 28 years. Among her fellow passengers are several General Office employees.

INSPECTION TOUR — AC Transit Acting General Manager Gene P. Gardiner (right) confers with Oakland City Councilwoman Aleta Canon (center) as representatives of the District and the city inspect Franklin Street, named in proposals to reroute vehicular flow in central Oakland to ease traffic and improve mobility. New AC Transit headquarters, under construction, is at upper right.
Behind-the-wheel test

Media focuses on cones and barrels

When the dust finally settled at the Training and Education Center July 9, a KCBS radio reporter had outshone six other Bay Area media reporters in the art of maneuvering coaches around an unofficial "Bus Roadeo" course. This novel clash of behind-the-wheel skills had news-making results.

In past years, area news reporters have helped publicize the annual competition among the District's professional drivers. This year, with opening of the District's own off-street driving course, the reporters could be invited to test their personal skills (and risk their egos) at the challenging task of wheelsling a 10-ton city bus amid many obstacles.

The test route for this event was shorter and simpler than the official Roadeo course familiar to the veteran bus drivers who vied later in July for a local first-place win plus an opportunity to compete for national honors. Yet to the seven novices, the foreshortened course proved an ample challenge, especially since their judges in this event were the transit professionals who normally are subject to the scrutiny of these veteran public transportation reporters.

The instructors did take pains to label various obstacles around the course: the newsies found themselves running down barrels titled "Managing Editor" and traffic cones marked "Assignment Desk." And, predictably, obstacle markers fell victim to bumps and battering at the hands of the novices behind the steering wheel.

Extensive news coverage was generated by the event — aimed (in addition to creating light-hearted rivalry) at giving the reporters a better understanding of the challenge involved in piloting a standard size bus through hazard-filled highways and urban streets routinely traversed by public transportation professionals.

Well, nobody said it was easy!
At an adjourned regular meeting June 25, the Board of Directors:

- Authorized Request for Proposal for marketing research survey, on motion of Director Bettencourt.
- Approved District endorsement and support of private, non-profit “Booster Club” of public transit passengers, advocates, and community supporters, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Accepted Draft Final Corridor Assessment Project Report; authorized Request for Proposal for second phase of Bay Bridge Corridor System Planning Study, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Approved a slate of service curtailments to take effect September 14; adopted Five-Year Plan Update, Fiscal Years 1987-91, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Approved communication suggesting amendments to proposed Assembly Bill 4382, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

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

- Authorized travel of one staff member to attend APTA's August 14-15 symposium on drug and alcohol abuse; adopted resolution congratulating San Mateo County Transit District on its tenth anniversary, on motion of Director Rinehart.
- Approved a slate of service curtailments to take effect September 14; adopted Five-Year Plan Update, Fiscal Years 1987-91, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.
- Approved communication suggesting amendments to proposed Assembly Bill 4382, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

Oakland's City Center (see story, pg. 3); accepted report of Central District Transit System Improvement Study, Phase II, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.

- Adopted resolution establishing appropriations limit for Fiscal Year 1986-87 tax proceeds; approved FY 1986-87 Operating Budget (see story, pg. 4), on motion of Director Wiggins.