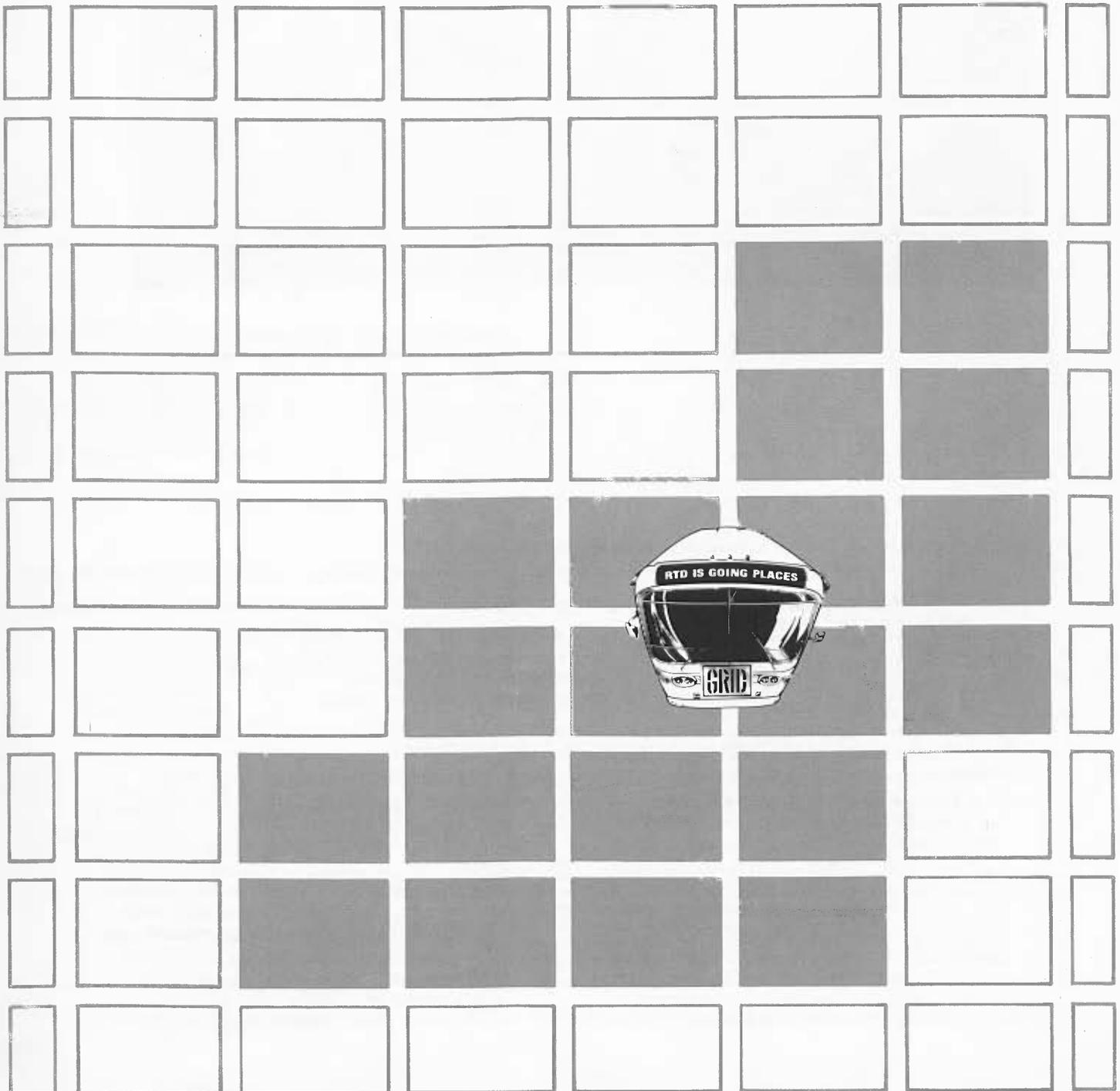


64-652

Rapid Transit Digest



COVER: The cover design symbolizes the Los Angeles area's two new grid bus systems.

The Southern California Rapid Transit District

As mandated by the California State Legislature in 1964, the public agency has the twin obligation of maintaining, implementing, and operating the existing bus system, while proceeding as quickly as funding permits to design, engineer, and build a Basin-wide rapid transit system.

To accomplish these goals, the legislators created an eleven-member board, to be appointed as follows:

1. Five by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; one by each supervisor
2. Two by the mayor of the City of Los Angeles with the concurrence of the City Council
3. Four by the City Selection Committee representing the other 75 municipalities within the areas of Los Angeles County contained in the District

Generally, the District consists of all Los Angeles County with the exception of island areas and that territory lying north of the San Gabriel Mountains. The District provides, on a contract basis, bus service in the heavily populated parts of Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. Since these counties are not part of the District as created by law, they do not have representation on the board of directors. Also, within Los Angeles County, there are several municipal bus lines that are operated independently of the District. Currently, the District provides 83 per cent of the public transit services within the county.

RTD Board Members

Supervisorial Appointees

Albert J. Eyraud
Donald H. Gibbs
Thomas G. Neusom
Peter F. Schabarum
Baxter Ward

Los Angeles Mayoral
Appointees

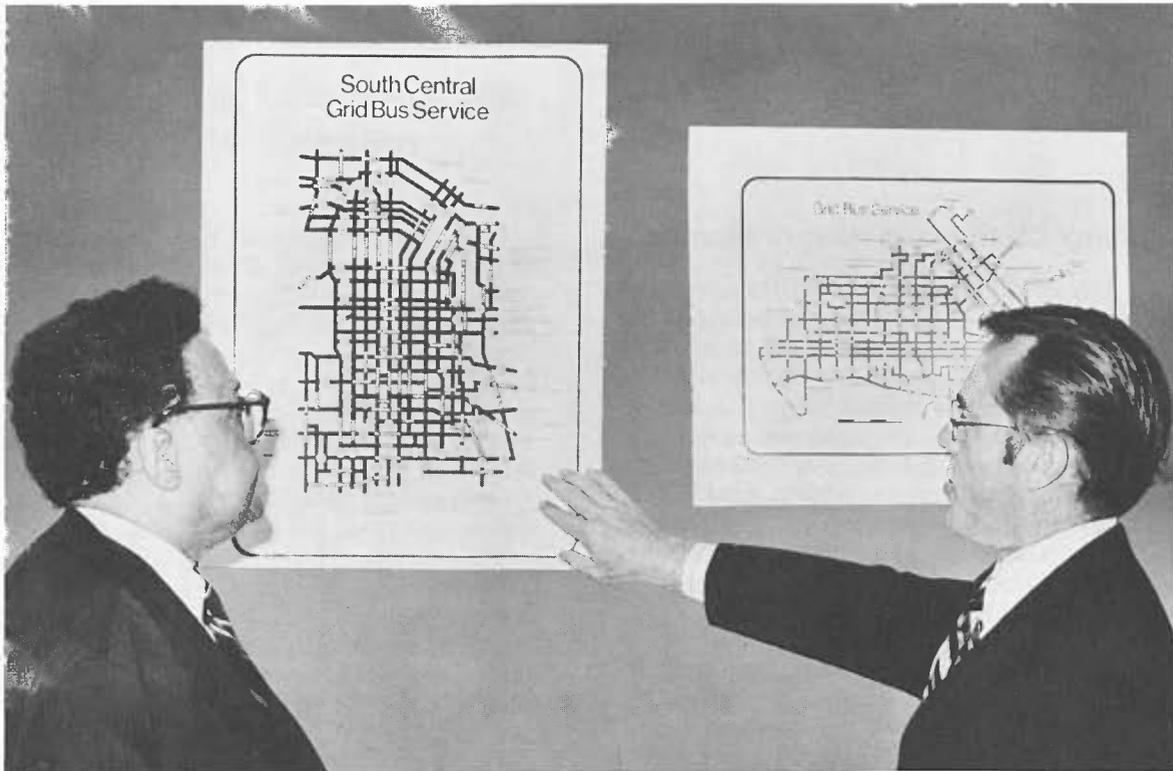
Victor M. Carter
George Takei

City Selection Appointees

George W. Brewster
Byron E. Cook
Adelina Gregory
Jay B. Price

General Manager

J. R. Gilstrap



U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman, Jr. (left), got a first-hand briefing in Los Angeles recently on the RTD's innovative grid bus systems from Jack R. Gilstrap, RTD general manager.

The Grid Bus Concept Comes to Los Angeles

As the holiday season approached at the end of 1973, the oil spigots in the middle east were being turned off. Succeeding weeks were to bring higher gasoline prices, long lines at filling stations, odd-even day rationing systems, and federal government talk of coupon rationing.

Los Angeles-area residents were shocked by the realization that their almost complete reliance on the automobile for mobility was subject to financial and political curtailment.

A result of this realization is that the region's public transportation, after a period of decline dating back to World War II, is on its way to becoming a practical, competitive alternative to the private car.

As the community began to learn 18 months ago, there was little the existing bus system could do to handle a dramatic increase in demand. The 1,648 coaches of the Southern California Rapid Transit District, the operator of more than 80 per cent of the available public transit services in Los Angeles County, were already carrying capacity loads at rush hours.

A complex system of more than 300 zones made riding the bus a complicated and costly endeavor. Service on many routes was so infrequent as to be of little use to many people.

Many Changes in Recent Months

But much has changed in the past year and one-half. A total of 2,170 buses now cruise the streets of the Basin, an increase of 522—or as many buses as operate in the entire fleet of Milwaukee.

A flat fare program instituted in April of 1974 in Los Angeles County made the financial aspect of the system easy to understand. New routes and extensions to existing ones also made bus riding more convenient.

But even a lower fare and system modifications were not enough to lure many drivers from their cars. Late last spring the outward signs of the energy crisis eased—gasoline prices reached a plateau, the lines and specified days of purchase disappeared at the corner filling station, and the millions of coupons the federal government printed up remain on the shelves in Washington.

How long petroleum will remain readily available is a matter of speculation. But nearly everyone will agree that as a long-term matter, the energy crisis is still very much with us—and, as a corollary, public transportation is one of the prime ways to combat the problem.

Subsidy Leads to Grids

So with the aid of a subsidy from the County of Los Angeles, the RTD instituted two experimental programs this spring to make the bus competitive with the auto in a new way—on the basis of convenience.

As worked out by contract with the County, the heavily-populated South Central and San Fernando Valley areas were chosen for saturation bus service—what the District has called “grid bus systems.”

Webster defines the word grid, used as a noun, as “a network of uniformly spaced horizontal and perpendicular lines,” and as a verb, “to equip or cover with a grid, to connect into a grid; distribute by means of a grid.”

Except for instances where terrain, lack of through streets, or other obstacles were apparent, the two areas chosen for the grid experiments meet the dictionary definition. Translating the words into service, what the residents of the areas are getting is buses on all major north-south and east-west streets, every 20 minutes during the day—with such frequency and so many bus stop locations, timetables are not really necessary.

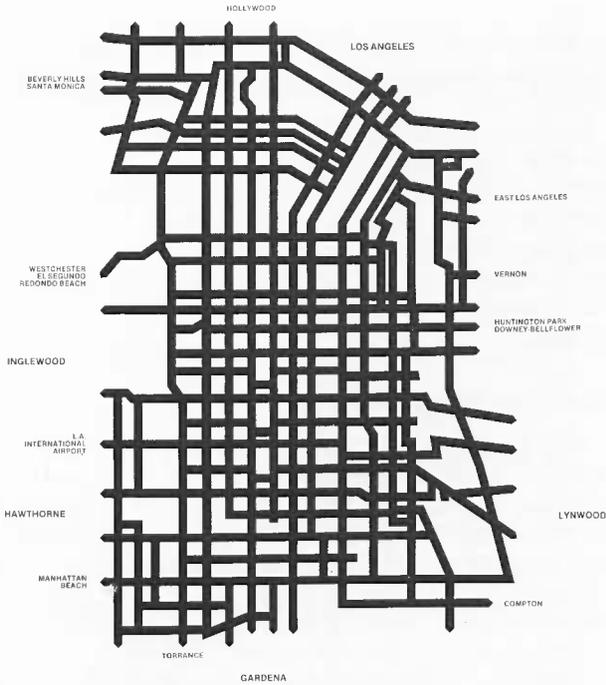
The two areas were selected for the experiments for a number of reasons. They are the homes of nearly two million of the County's seven million persons. Their street layout, unlike other regions of the County, offered good possibilities for the crisscross service concept. They contained not only persons who historically had been heavy riders of buses, but those who had not—and the reactions of both groups were needed if any further application of the concept were to be tried.

San Fernando Valley

Because of the extremely high percentage of families with one or more cars, the San Fernando Valley offered a good opportunity to test the grid concept's ability to draw motorists from autos.

A total of 104 buses were added to the Valley, a 50 per cent increase. The service area is bounded by the Porter Ranch/Sylmar area on the north, Ventura Boulevard on the south, Glenoaks Boulevard on the east, and the Woodland Hills/Chatsworth area on the west. A bus is available every 20 minutes during the day within a half mile of almost everyone within the 240 square mile service area.

South Central Los Angeles Grid Bus Service



South Central Los Angeles

The other area chosen for the grid experiment offered a somewhat different situation. Since 17 per cent of the families in Los Angeles County do not own an auto, and the majority of these live in South Central Los Angeles, the area has long had a high level of transportation. The grid system made it even more attractive.

The area is bounded on the north by Olympic Boulevard, on the South by Rosecrans Avenue, on the east by Alameda Street, and on the west by Crenshaw Boulevard, an area of approximately 60 square miles. Residents living within the boundaries can catch a bus within three blocks of any point and wait no longer than 20 minutes. With a single transfer, if necessary, they should be able to reach their destinations in any part of the grid area.

San Fernando Valley Grid Bus Service



Public Response Enthusiastic

A joint-agency committee consisting of the RTD, Los Angeles City and County officials, and representatives from the state department of transportation (Caltrans) has been formed to evaluate the two programs.

Preliminary ridership figures indicate the grid systems are being enthusiastically received. Within the San Fernando Valley, daily ridership has more than doubled since implementation—an increase of 16,000 passengers per day.

In South Central Los Angeles, checks on individual lines show increases up to 79 per cent.

Two Other Areas Set for Improvement

Even while the two programs now in full operation were being planned and implemented, the RTD had studies well underway in two other locales: the San Gabriel Valley and Southeast Los Angeles.

The firm of Wilbur Smith & Associates was selected by the District to conduct a study of the transit needs of the area lying

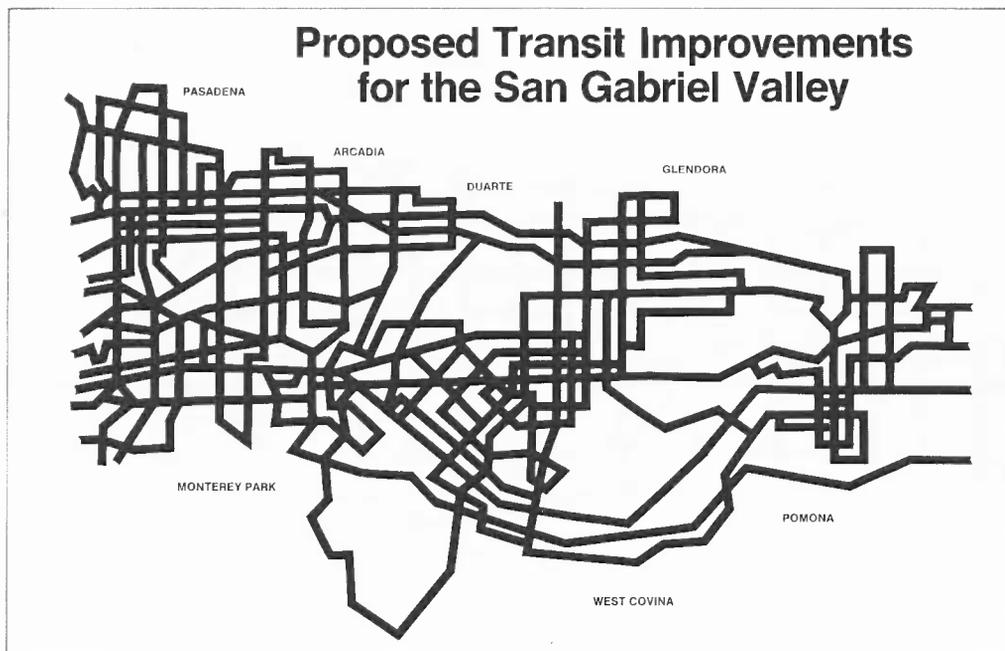
generally north of the Pomona Freeway and east from Pasadena to the San Bernardino County line.

Because of the topography and low density of population in many portions, a grid system was felt to be impractical. The Smith firm thus developed a system of service calling for an additional 47 buses, an increase of nearly 50 per cent in daily bus mileage, and greatly increased frequency.

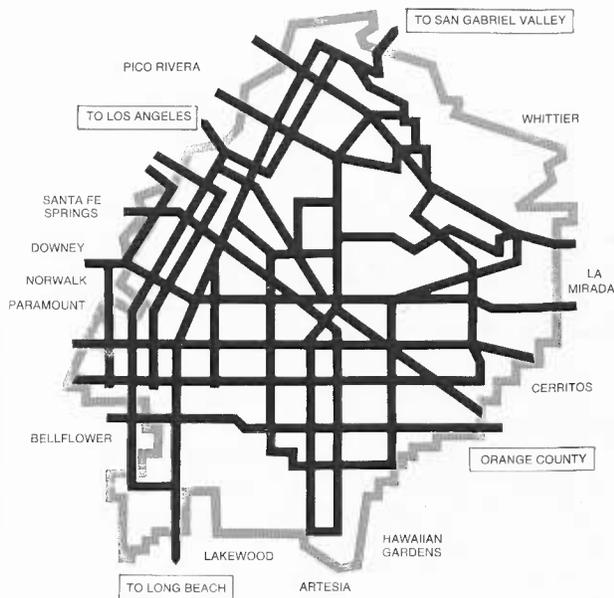
Busway Heart of System

The proposal calls for making the El Monte-Los Angeles Express Busway, now carrying over 15,000 riders daily, the dominant element in San Gabriel Valley transportation. Additional bus stations, adjacent to the Busway, were recommended for West Covina and Pomona.

The RTD board of directors received the report and instructed District staff to present it to the communities for their reaction. This process is scheduled for completion in June, at which time final recommendations will be presented to the RTD board.



Proposed Transit Improvements for Southeast Los Angeles County



Mid Cities Area

A similar study for the part of the County comprising Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, Lakewood, La Mirada, Norwalk, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, and Whittier (the "Mid-Cities" area) was conducted by the consulting firm, Centers for Study.

These recommendations were taken to the various communities involved, and in the final plan up for consideration by the board, call for an addition of 44 buses. Again because of terrain and the lack of through streets, a grid system like the two in operation is not possible.

In addition to the San Gabriel and "Mid-Cities" analyses, the District also has studies under preparation in the South Bay and downtown Los Angeles areas.

Park-Ride Offers New Commuter Option

While not part of the grid system per se, another program launched last year by the RTD is also highly successful in causing many drivers to remove their cars from crowded streets and freeways—the park and ride concept.

The District currently has 11 such facilities with more scheduled for operation this summer.

The concept, providing express service to downtown Los Angeles from outlying areas, is proving highly successful. For example, the facility opened in La Mirada in April of 1974 carried only a couple of dozen passengers a day its first week. Presently, it carries nearly 600. The service from Long Beach started with four buses a day in October, went to five in December, seven in January, nine in March and currently offers eleven.

The combined impact of the new grid services, park and ride lots, and other District improvements is laying to rest a hallowed myth: the one that says "nothing will get the Angeleno out of his car." He is trying the bus—and wonder of wonders—is finding out it's not all that bad. He is acutely aware, in an era of double-digit inflation, how much his pocketbook is benefiting. He is also finding out, due to the increased level of service, that the bus is now getting competitive in terms of time and convenience.

Scheduled new bus services, the prospect of commuter rail service this fall, and continuing rapid transit planning combined with the vastly upgraded current service add up to an area that is moving towards balanced transportation. With continued community support, the RTD will move further along toward this goal—not seeking by any means to replace the auto, but to provide a much-needed alternate.



Sacramento Looks at Southland Transit

In recent years, officials in Sacramento have devoted more and more of their time and effort to addressing the problems of public transit in the Southland. The current legislative session, like its predecessors, is considering several transit-related measures.

Direct interest by the lawmakers in the shape of public transportation in the Basin goes back to 1951, with their creation of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (LAMTA). Initially only a planning agency, the organization acquired two major transit properties and moved into the operating field in 1958—again, at the direction of the state.

In 1964, the legislators set up the present agency, the Southern California Rapid Transit District, to succeed LAMTA. The District had twin mandates, running bus service and implementation of rapid transit.

Since creation of the District, the legislature has passed many transit bills, including the key Transportation Development Act of 1971 (SB 325), which, for the first time, provided continuing support for transit agencies in the form of a portion of sales tax proceeds.

Presently in Sacramento, the legislature is considering, among others, the following bills: _____

- SB 8, SB 47 — bills that would create an elected RTD board of directors
- SB 100 — would add two cents to the present gasoline tax and allocate proceeds to rail rapid transit
- SB 101 — would create new transit development boards in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties to implement rapid transit systems
- SB 102, SB 441 — bills that would establish state boards to review plans and spending proposals of area and regional transit agencies
- SB 103 — would allocate certain portions of the state sales tax (SB 325) revenues presently received by transit properties directly to fixed guideway projects; at present, such funds can be used entirely for buses
- AB 1246 — would change both the scope and name of the Southern California Rapid Transit District; would in effect create two organizations, one to operate bus services, the other to design and construct a rapid transit system
- AB 1998 — would allow municipal operators not in operation in 1971 to utilize sales tax (SB 325) proceeds allocated for transit (currently, only those properties in operation at that time can qualify for the funds)



On the executive side, the state's secretary of business and transportation has said the administration's overall policy will be one of not building any new freeways, but rather one of improving the existing system and helping cities develop public transit facilities.

In addition to the pending legislation calling for administrative and jurisdictional changes, there are other bills affecting transit, including collective bargaining for public employees and installation of emergency equipment on buses.

NEWS From Other Properties

Mayor Joseph Alioto is among many San Franciscans who are riding public transportation at least one day each week to their jobs. On Mondays, financial workers are urged to leave their cars at home and on Tuesdays employees of large corporations are asked to do the same. Wednesday is the day for the Mayor and other governmental workers, and Thursday the day for public utility workers to use public transit. On Fridays, all others, such as retailers and shoppers, are invited to participate. Mayor Alioto says on a nationwide basis such a program could save a million barrels of fuel a day.

A public transit incentive of another type is being tried in the New York City area — or perhaps auto disincentive is a better term. A 50 per cent increase in tolls on six tunnels and bridges connecting New York and New Jersey for autos raises the daily cost to \$1.50. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey officials say bus tolls will not change, and the \$39 million realized as a result of higher auto tolls will be used for public transit improvements.

The largest single public transportation improvement in the history of Colorado is being realized in the six-county area around Denver, according to Regional Transportation District officials. The District's 93 new buses are allowing it to increase its distance traveled by 10,000 miles per week.

Buses were back on the streets in New Orleans after 81 days when Amalgamated Transit Union Members agreed to go back to work for \$4.41 an hour while arbitration was being completed. They previously had been making \$4.125 per hour. Results of the arbitration process will be retroactive to July 1, 1974.

Frank Herringer, administrator of the Federal government's Urban Mass Transportation Administration, will become the new general manager of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District in July. The job has been vacant since last year.

Transit authorities in New York are working on a program which may make the familiar clickety-clack sound of trains on tracks a distant memory. They are welding sections of track together, thus eliminating the gaps or joints which created the sounds when wheels passed over them.



RTD Facts at a Glance . . .



. . . you can catch a bus, one of 2,170, at any of 25,000 stops in the RTD four-county service area



. . . you can then travel to 180 communities on the District's 3,600 one-way route miles



. . . as a passenger, you are one of 610,000 to board that workday; one of 195,000,000 a year



. . . the quarter you drop in the farebox is matched by approximately seventy-five cents from other sources, since farebox revenues produce only about 25 per cent of the revenue the District needs to continue operations



. . . the person driving your bus is one of 3,800, and is backed by 770 mechanics, 410 clerks, and 590 administrative personnel



. . . some 100 of these people staff the RTD information switchboard, which, except for Pacific Telephone, is the largest in Los Angeles and answers questions for more than 9,000 callers each day

Marketing and Communications
Southern California Rapid Transit District
1060 South Broadway,
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