From Dream to Reality

Monte–Los Angeles Busway

Rapid Transit is alive and well in Los Angeles.

It happened rather quietly, without the benefit of shining steel rails and futuristic transit cars . . . but it happened.

It's eleven miles long and it carries passengers at high speed through one of the most heavily congested travel corridors in Southern California . . . smoothly, comfortably, and economically.

It's called the El Monte-Los Angeles Busway, and the purist who claims that this doesn't measure up to the real definition of rapid transit would get a strong argument from thousands of people who tried it and have come back for more every day of the week.

Because the Busway was placed in service on an incremental basis, the impact of the dedication of its final element on February 18, 1975 has been substantially diminished.

The significance of this milestone overshadows the dedication of the last of three on-line stations, for the Busway will henceforth operate as a total system, and the official two-year test period of the Busway exclusively by buses will be under way.

What is reality today was only a dream just six years ago when the Busway concept was developed by the Southern California Rapid Transit District and joint planning efforts were begun with Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration.

It was a dream which envisioned the utilization of an 11 mile stretch of existing right of way for a real test of community acceptance of the concept of rapid transit, the first in the Southland since the heyday of the Pacific Electric Railroad and its well-loved Red Cars.

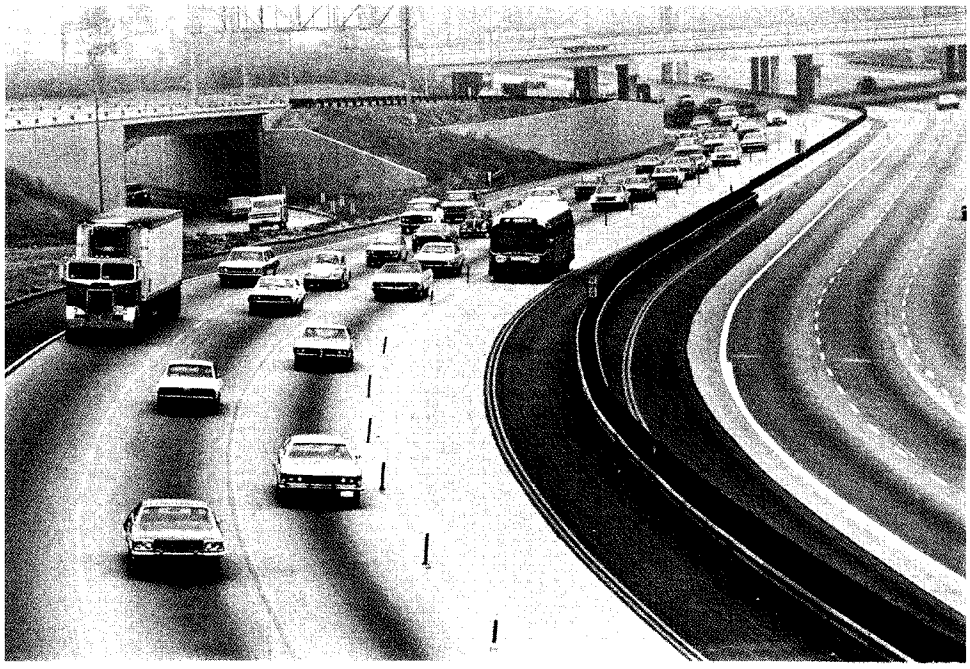
Fond memories, unfortunately, are not the stuff of which improvements in public transportation are built. Meticulous planning and design, coupled with a farsighted spirit of cooperation among governmental agencies, together build the base on which an adequate application of funding produces a major step forward.

The El Monte-Los Angeles Express Busway is the end result of a precise blending of these ingredients.

As operation of the Busway moves into its second phase with the completion of the three scheduled on-line stations, it is already evident that Los Angeles can be provided portions of its rapid transit requirements by maximum utilization of an existing transportation corridor. Already demonstrated is the fact that the Busway concept can be implemented within a relatively short time span.

Clearly demonstrated in the initial phase of operation is the fact that high-speed bus service will attract patrons, that as the service is maintained and enhanced to meet growing response, ridership continues to grow.

When the first seven miles of the system were placed in service in July, 1973, daily ridership was approximately 4000. By January of 1975, with the full eleven miles of Busway in use, but prior to dedication of the final on-line station at California State University Los Angeles, ridership

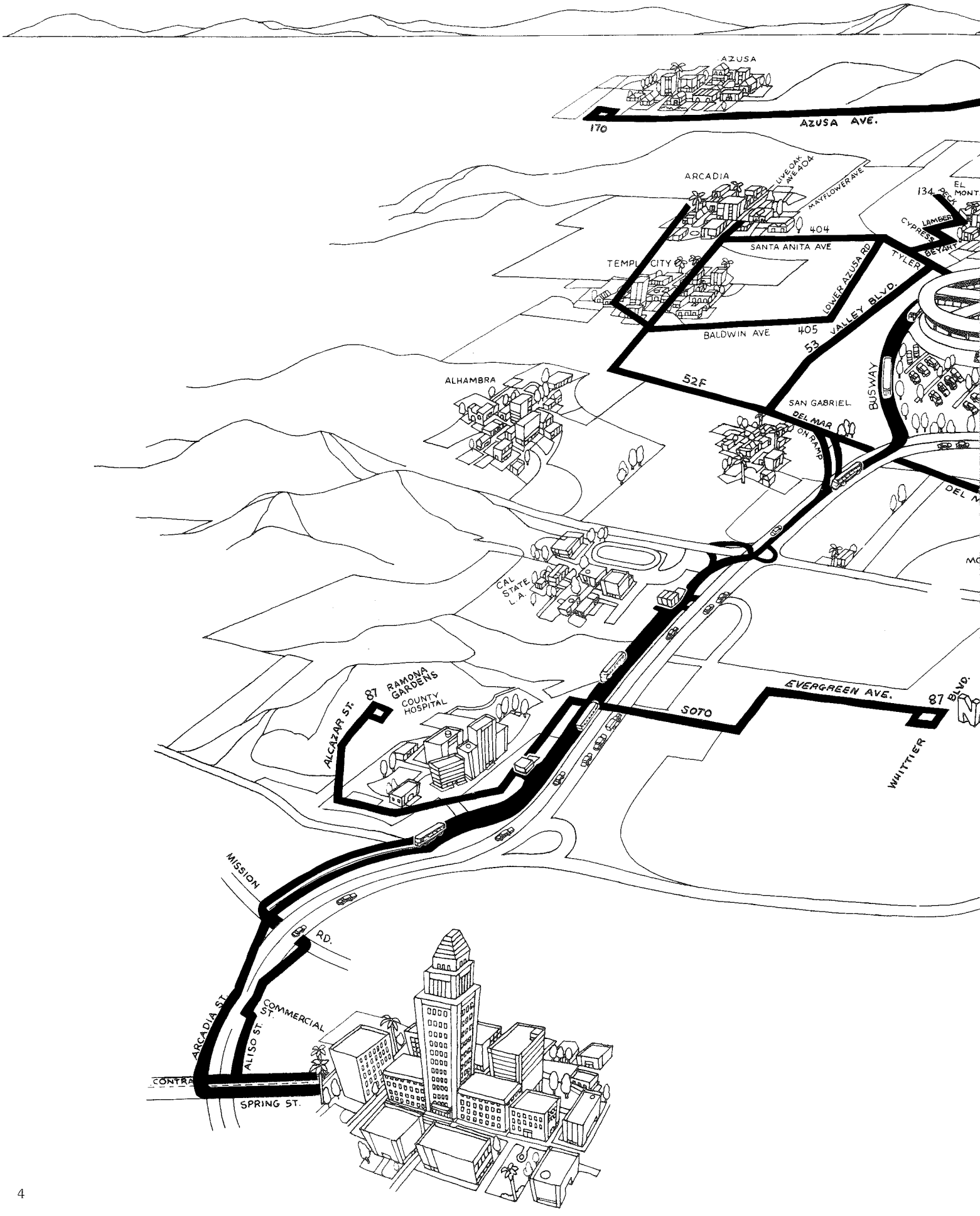


was exceeding 12,000 per day, an increase of some 300%.

Two factors have contributed to the need for preferential treatment of high-occupancy vehicles, of which the El Monte-Los Angeles Busway is a major national prototype.

The first of these factors, concern over air quality, is particularly applicable to the Los Angeles region, where the photochemical oxidant (smog) problem is severe. Since the bulk of pollutants which create smog are generated by motor vehicles, the Federal Clean Air Act of 1970 has resulted in the development of a highly restrictive Transportation Control Plan by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Although there is general agreement that the restrictions on personal mobility required by the EPA plan would substantially disrupt the Southern California life style, alternatives must be developed and implemented which will reduce the amount of vehicle miles traveled in the Los Angeles Region.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MAYFLOWER AVE
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VALLEY BLVD.
BALDWIN AVE.
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ALHAMBRA
SAN GABRIEL
DEL MAR
ON RAMP
BUSWAY
CAL STATE L.A.
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COUNTY HOSPITAL
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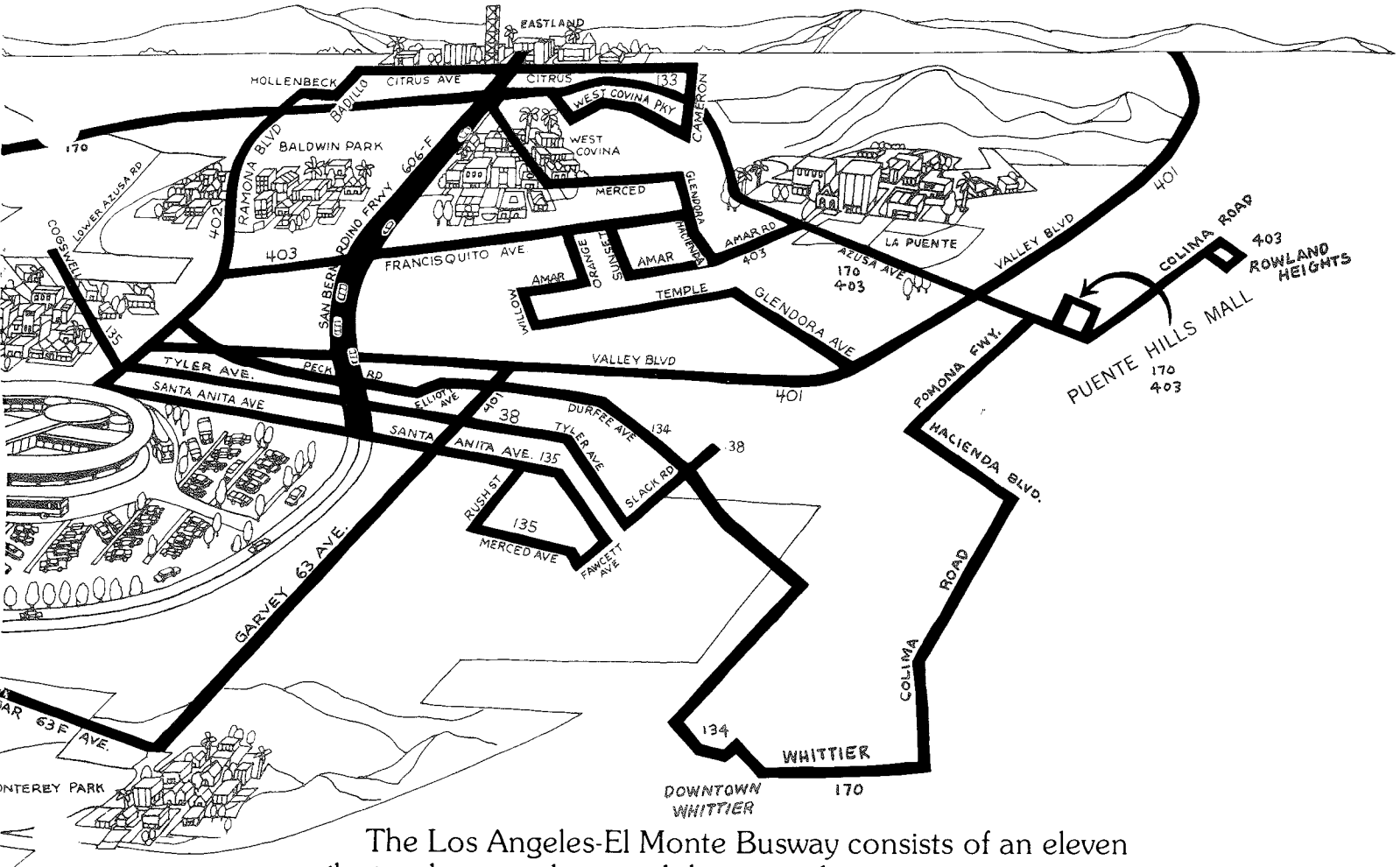

The Los Angeles-El Monte Busway consists of an eleven mile, two-lane roadway and three rapid transit stations. Commencing in the East at the El Monte Station, where a Park and Ride facility is located, the Busway occupies the median of the San Bernardino Freeway from El Monte to a point just east of the Long Beach Freeway interchange. Here, the Busway crosses both freeways on an overhead ramp and parallels the San Bernardino Freeway to the north. West of the University Station, the westbound Busway lane crosses over the eastbound lane, reversing the normal placement of the lanes. Moving on past the Hospital Station, the lanes remain reversed to their termination at Mission Road. From this point buses share right of way with other surface vehicles in mixed traffic for the final 1.3 miles into the Central Business District, with certain route extensions continuing on to the Wilshire Corridor.

Major participants in financing the $56 million project included the Federal Highway Administration, 65%; Federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration, 17%; California Department of Transportation, 8%; RTD, 8%, and the Southern Pacific Transportation Company, 2%. The Cities of El Monte, Los Angeles and San Gabriel were also involved in the planning process.

The second factor is the continuing energy shortage. Again, improved utilization of fossil fuels over the long term is essential to efficient and cost-effective movements of people and goods.

Preferential treatment of high-occupancy vehicles is considered an appropriate action to induce a shift from single-occupancy vehicles necessary to satisfy the need to both improve air quality and ameliorate the energy shortage over a protracted time period.

As an element of the District's near-term plans for bus service improvements in Los Angeles County, the Busway is an important demonstration of the feasibility of preferential treatment of high-occupancy vehicles, both on freeways and surface streets. The introduction of a contraflow lane on Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles in 1974 has contributed significantly to performance of buses as they perform their dual function as feeder and mainline vehicles.

As part of the ongoing test program of the Busway, RTD, in cooperation with Caltrans and local governmental agencies, will move ahead with a variety of preferential lane experiments on streets and freeways where traffic patterns indicate a potential for improving commute speed.

There is no question that the superior, and highly visible, speed with which patrons traverse the Busway in full view of motorists trapped in peak-hour traffic on the adjoining San Bernardino Freeway has contributed to the growth in ridership. Commuter profiles indicate that 60% are from households with two or more automobiles. Extension of this trip-time advantage to additional preferential lane service will further enhance the image of public transportation as an efficient and attractive alternative to the automobile for the non-transit dependent.


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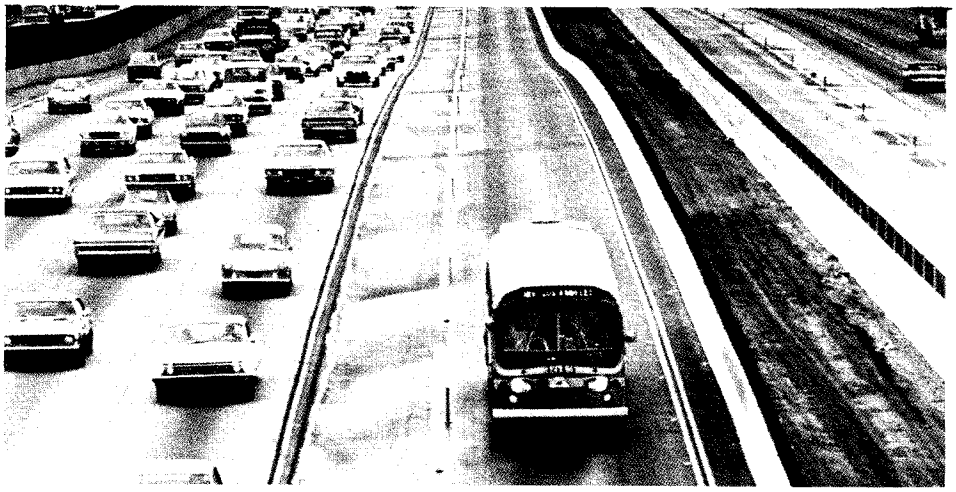
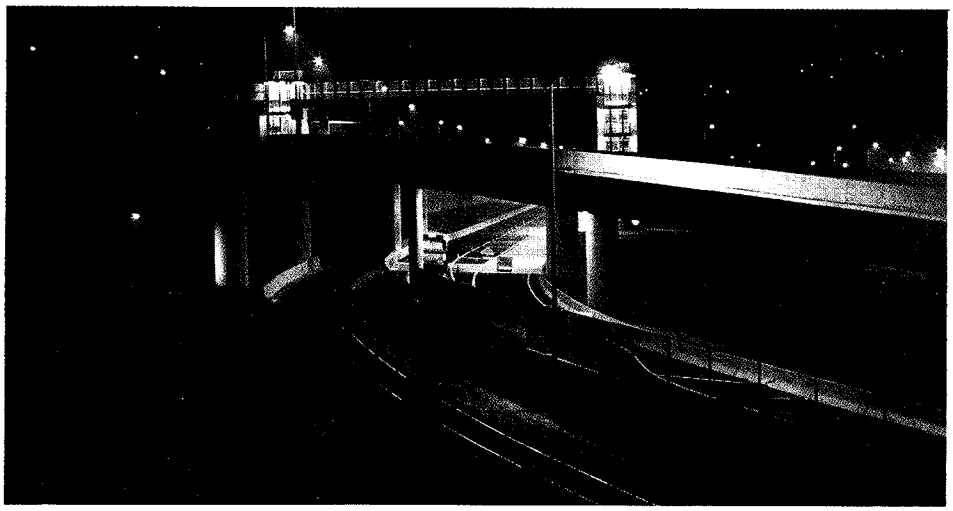
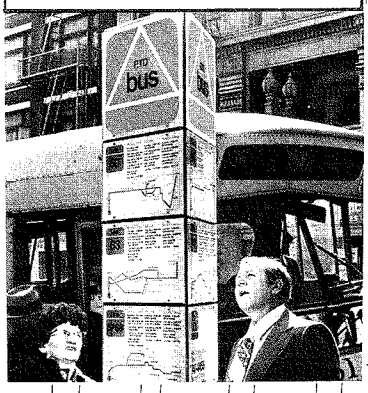




BUS STOPS

OUTBOUND
BUSWAY
CONTRAFLOW
SERVICE



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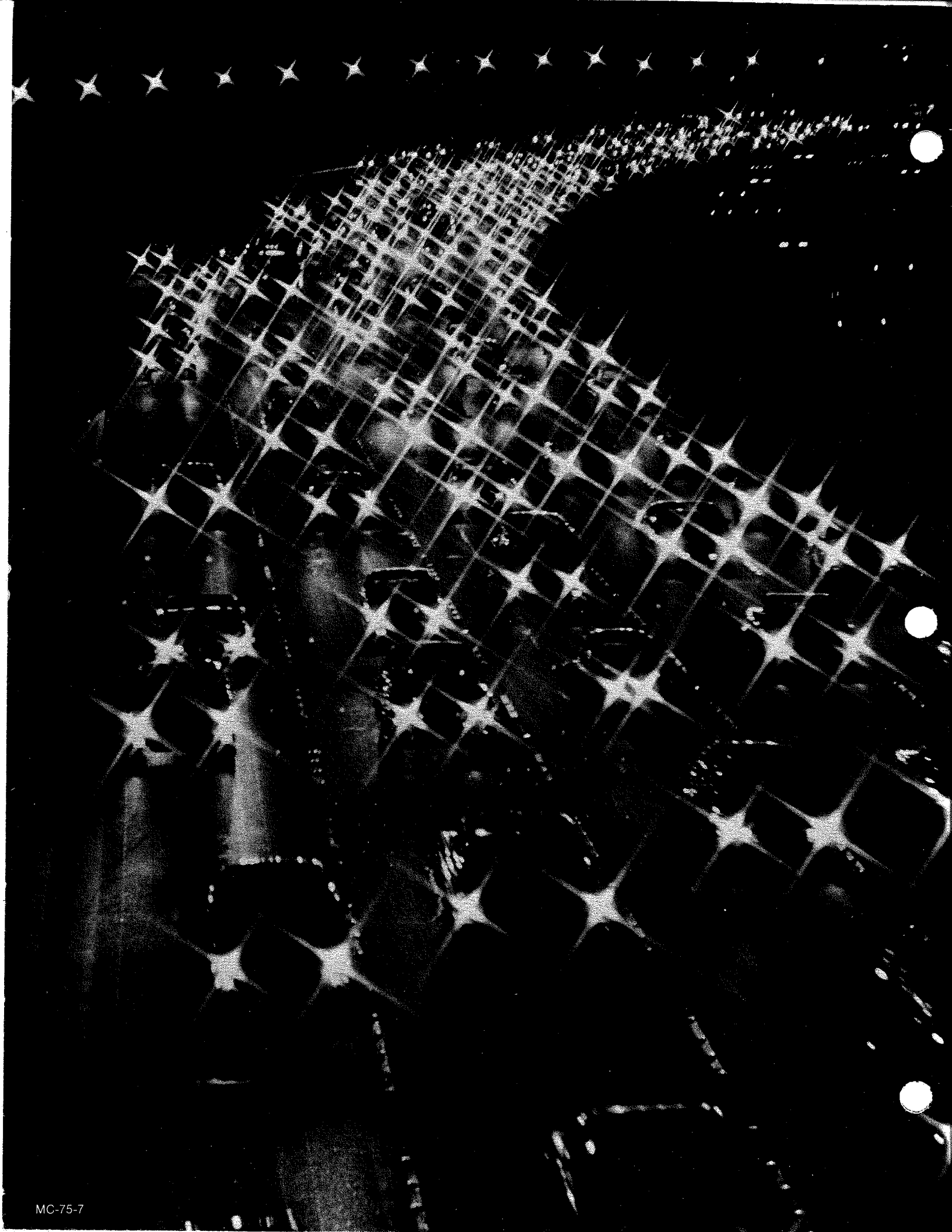
El Monte - Los Angeles Busway Demonstration Objectives

- To determine the usage and operational characteristics of a bus mass transit system on exclusive lanes in the median of a freeway in an automobile-oriented, major metropolitan area.
- To determine the feasibility of providing three modes of transportation (automobile, bus, rail) in a single corridor.
- To establish a rationale for planning future freeways incorporating mass transit facilities.
- To determine the performance of alternate types of rubber-tired vehicles as well as control and communication systems in connection with bus rapid transit operations.
- To determine the effectiveness of fringe parking facilities.
- To perform a cost-benefit evaluation of the busway.
- To perform a transit ridership market analysis.
- To evaluate the interactive effects between the bus transit system and automobiles in the Los Angeles Central Business District.

Southern California Rapid Transit District 425 South Main St., Los Angeles, California 90013



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