

64-689

Rapid Transit Digest



FRONT COVER: RTD's new information sign is examined by patron on Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles.

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 rapid transit system for the area.

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

“\$11.8 Billion Federal Transit Bill to Benefit L.A. Area” . . . “Buses Return to Streets After Record Strike” . . . “Bus Ridership Up 20% Due to 25¢ Flat Fare” . . . “Legislature to Consider RTD Structure” . . .

You saw and heard these headlines within the past few months — as well as others dealing with double-deck buses, Proposition A, completion of the El Monte Busway, and reverse flow bus lanes.

Public transportation can lay strong claim to being the 1974 Story of the Year in Los Angeles. And with 1975 already seeing two Los Angeles County Supervisors joining the RTD Board of Directors, new buses arriving daily, two dramatic grid systems being implemented, and rapid transit planning continuing, there is every reason to feel this momentum and high public interest will continue.

With so many critical and important activities taking place, it is difficult for an individual to maintain a perspective on the various events. It is for this reason you now have the “Rapid Transit Digest” in front of you.

On a quarterly basis, in a non-ponderous, non-technical style and format, we will attempt to keep you abreast of pertinent transit developments. Even though you may not at present use public transportation, or may not ever, you are aware of other headlines appearing in the press — those dealing with gasoline rationing, higher gas taxes, higher smog levels, and more expensive automobiles. This publication will give you a look at the District’s efforts to alleviate some of these problems which are of direct concern to all of us.


JACK R. GILSTRAP
General Manager



1974 — The Year of the Dollar

From ten-cent Sunday bus rides to \$10 monthly passes to \$36 million in county subsidy to over \$1 billion in federal transit aid, the recurring theme in Los Angeles public transportation in 1974 was money.

For the first time in the District’s 10-year history, the necessary wherewithal to begin to solve the region’s public transit needs was made available. Both the general public and their elected representatives demonstrated this long-overdue support.

The public eagerly responded to lower bus fares and gave heavy approval to a June ballot measure which authorized diversion of a portion of gas tax revenues from roads to public transit.

Officials at the county and federal levels made unprecedented commitments. Los Angeles County Supervisors, after supporting ten-cent Sunday and twenty-five-cent weekday fares on trial bases, voted to fund the twenty-five-cent fare and other transit improvements for a full-year.

And from the nation’s capital at year’s end came a Christmas present for urban transit properties across the country: an \$11.8 billion transit bill. Depending on the final federal formulas and availability of local matching funds, the Los Angeles metropolitan area share will range from \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion.

The money situation in 1974 was not completely confined to the positive side of the ledger, however. In reacting to the pressures of the worst inflationary year in recent times, the electorate in November said "no" to an issue which would have spanned the extremes of the monetary spectrum—a one-cent sales tax increase to provide the financial base for a \$4.7 billion rapid transit and bus improvement plan.

Another debit in the 1974 ledger came in the form of higher costs. With both the District's suppliers and employees feeling the effects of double-digit inflation, large portions of the new-found sources of revenue could not be allocated for needed new service or equipment. The diesel fuel bill on existing service went up over \$200,000 per month in 1974—and more gallons were needed each month as the year wore on due to new service being added.

In August, when terms of new contracts had not been negotiated, the District's over 4,000 operators and mechanics left their jobs and more than 685,000 daily passengers were left without their normal public transportation. After 68 crippling days, RTD buses were back on the streets, but again the cost was high—24 per cent increases in wages and fringe benefits over the life of the two-year contracts.

But despite these negative entries, the 1974 books were primarily filled with pulses.



Ten-cent Sundays

The "Year of the Dollar" started out modestly enough. January 20 was designated as "Sample Sunday." For ten cents, a person could board any RTD bus in the four-county service area and ride it to the end of the line—regardless of whether that end was but a few blocks or the 60 miles from downtown Los Angeles to San Bernardino.

Angelenos knew a bargain when they saw it, and despite a drizzly, dreary day, 100,000 persons more than usual took a look at the RTD that Sunday.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also liked what it saw. The Supervisors voted to provide a subsidy to maintain the low fare for the next five months in Los Angeles County.

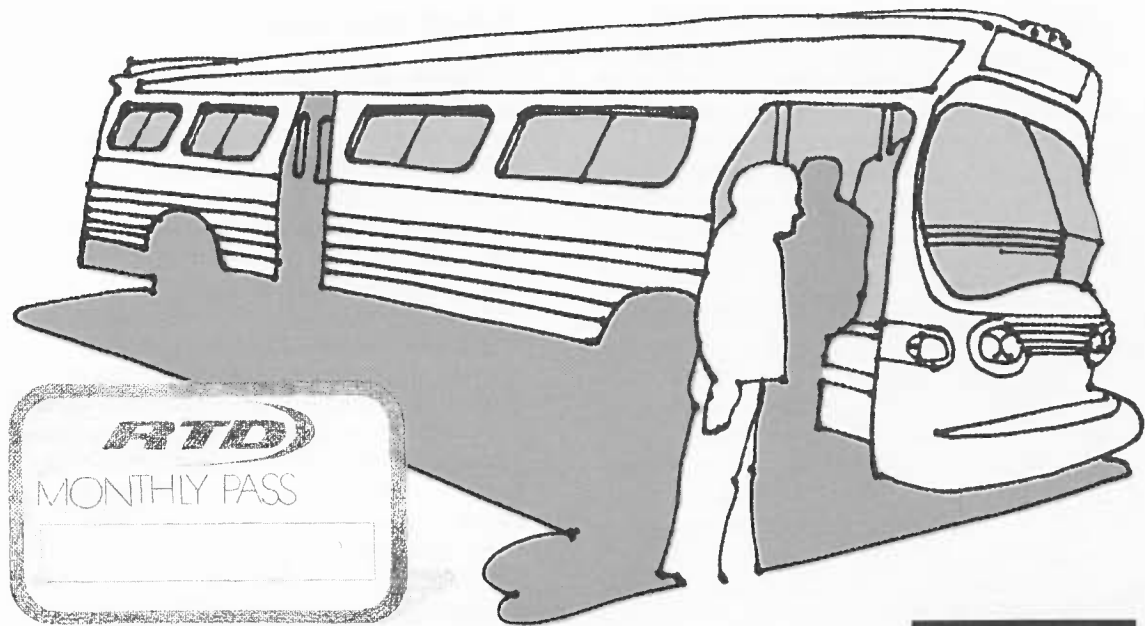
The Supervisors didn't stop there, however. As the low fares on Sundays continued to attract new riders, the District was requested to prepare studies and cost analyses of reduced fares on weekdays.



Twenty-Five cent Flat Fare

On April 1, thanks to a \$9.65 million county subsidy, the RTD and the seven municipal lines in Los Angeles County embarked on a three-month Monday through Saturday twenty-five-cent flat fare program. Like its ten-cent Sunday counterpart, the deposit of a quarter in the farebox was good for a trip to the end of the line, whether a few blocks or many miles, providing no county line was crossed. Eliminated was the cumbersome 300-plus zone increment system disliked by both passengers and drivers, which often boosted the basic fare (formerly thirty cents) two, three, or more times what the passenger initially paid before he finally got to his destination.

A transfer, if needed, good for three additional bus rides was only a dime. Thus, if a rider chose, he could board a bus in Pomona, transfer to a Santa Monica-bound bus in downtown Los Angeles, and wind up at the beach after spending the grand total of thirty-five cents for his nearly 50-mile trip. A monthly pass, good for unlimited Los Angeles County riding, was available for \$10.



To reduce waiting times between buses, 175 additional coaches were placed into service on 40 RTD lines. The park and ride concept, where an individual drives his car a short distance and then takes a bus to his destination, was put into practice in several outlying areas—La Mirada, the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel, south-central Los Angeles.

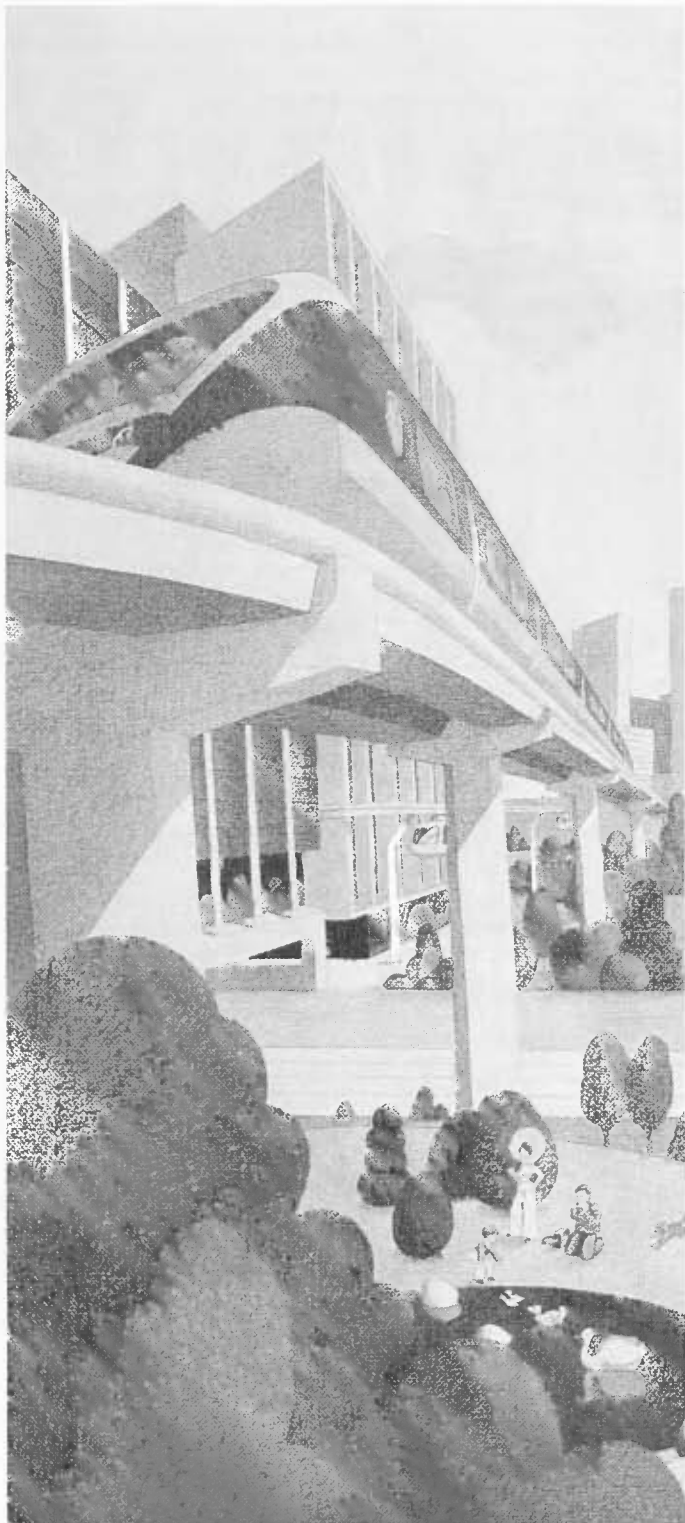
The results were impressive. As a specially prepared report later showed, during the 90-day experiment 101,000 persons more than usual rode the buses on workdays. Nearly two-thirds of these people gave up using their private autos, reducing such travel within the county by 530,000 miles per day and conserving about 42,400 gallons of scarce gasoline every 24 hours.

Once again, the Los Angeles County board of Supervisors liked what it saw. The Supervisors voted to subsidize the RTD and the municipal carriers in the county with over \$36 million for the year beginning July 1. The District, since it by far provides the majority of service, was to receive \$32.5 million. Riverside County later joined in funding a flat fare program similar to the one in Los Angeles County.



Gas Tax Diversion

Prior to that major decision by elected officials, voters across the state gave strong support to a ballot measure calling for a diversion of a portion of gasoline tax revenues to rapid transit purposes. Los Angeles County voters endorsed the action by more than 60 per cent, thus clearing the way for the first non-highway use of the funds since the taxes were initially collected in 1938.



Transit Improvement Plan Adopted

Shortly after this election, RTD board members announced that voters would have another transit measure to vote on in the fall. At their July 3 meeting, the board adopted a comprehensive regional transportation plan, calling for both long-term rapid transit and near-term bus improvements.

The plan called for 145 miles of grid-type rapid transit guideway, serving virtually all heavily populated sections of the county. Thirty miles of express busway were outlined. One thousand new buses were to be added to the current fleet to serve as an interim measure while the rapid transit system was being built.

Federal funds were expected to supply up to 80 per cent of the \$4.7 billion project. A one-cent increase in the sales tax was to have provided the local share.

The plan received endorsements from virtually everyone—planning organizations, politicians, business and professional groups, and many major mass media outlets.

But on election day, even though it would have cost the average family only around \$50 a year, inflation-weary Los Angeles County voters said “no” to Proposition A, which would have authorized the sales tax.

A similar measure in Orange County, calling for a 117-mile rapid transit and bus improvement program, also went down to defeat. The two plans had connecting transportation corridors at three junctures on the county line.

While voters in both counties rejected the funding mechanism for the two plans, both were adopted by the agency charged with developing regional planning coordination for the area, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). Determination of fund availability from both the federal and state governments is needed before rapid transit construction gets underway—it is hoped a decision can be reached on this phase of Los Angeles public transit by the middle of this year (see following story).

Bus Strike

Some voter antipathy towards November's transit improvement measure can no doubt also be attributed to the most unfortunate public transportation development of 1974—the nearly 10-week work stoppage that began in August and ended in October.

RTD drivers and mechanics had been working without a contract since May 31. Despite continuing negotiations right up until the buses stopped running, all RTD coaches were off the streets as of early Monday morning, August 12. It was to be Sunday, October 20, before they moved again.

Negotiating took place constantly, sometimes virtually around the clock, all during the strike. The mayor of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Supervisors, the Governor of California—all tried at various times to effect an end to the strike.

It was not until the District received assurances that a portion of the county subsidy could be used to meet higher costs resulting from higher wages and benefits that the strike was ended.

Service Improvements Continue

As expected, when bus service resumed in late October, ridership was down somewhat. But improvements in service began almost immediately.

A new park and ride lot was opened in Long Beach. A cross-town route was added in Pasadena. Lines were extended in the San Fernando Valley. An experimental double-deck bus arrived and will go into service shortly.

There were other Los Angeles public transportation milestones during 1974. An experimental contraflow lane (buses running the opposite way of auto traffic on a one-way street) was established in downtown Los Angeles in part to improve access to the El Monte-Los Angeles Express Busway. The Busway itself was improved—the last four miles of the total eleven-mile stretch were completed and a new access station to it was dedicated.

“The RTD Street Fleet,” buses with a submarine motif, made their rounds in the summer to take residents to the beach. Legal action was undertaken to achieve commuter rail service. Action was taken to insure that future bus purchases would provide equipment suitable for the aged and handicapped.

Unprecedented Federal Aid

To top off a year of progress on the transit scene, federal officials in the nation's capital made it the “Year of the Dollar” not for just the Los Angeles area, but for public transit in metropolitan areas across the country.

In signing the \$11.8 billion National Mass Transportation Act, President Ford for the first time authorized federal operating subsidies to transit properties. Previously, federal money was only available to operators for capital expenses.

The amount Los Angeles and vicinity could receive from the \$7.825 billion set aside in the bill for capital projects has yet to be exactly determined. The defeat of Proposition A will hamper efforts to secure funds for the Basin, since local money is needed to match the federal dollars. Other areas, with sources of local funding available, will be actively seeking money from this bill, and political as well as geographical considerations will enter into the distribution.

1974—A Beginning

But 1974 represented a beginning, both by the country in general and Los Angeles in particular. Public transportation was recognized as part of the solution to the energy crisis rather than part of the problem.

Much remains to be done. But the “Year of the Dollar”—from dimes on Sunday at the beginning to billions from Washington at the end—proved that the public and the politicians are willing to make this commitment.



Between New Year's Day and July 4th of this year, the Southern California Rapid Transit District will be . . .

- . . . inaugurating two new grid bus systems in the San Fernando Valley and South-Central Los Angeles, involving 31 new bus lines with service available every 20 minutes no more than three blocks from anyone's home
- . . . opening new park and ride lots in Pasadena and other areas
- . . . operating express buses on a special lane on the Santa Monica Freeway
- . . . expanding minibus service
- . . . running special summer beach service
- . . . adding a new access station on the San Bernardino Express Busway

1975 — The Year of the Encore?

In show business vernacular, 1975 Los Angeles public transit will find 1974 a tough "act to follow." But, if the first few weeks of the new year were any indication, there may be a "repeat performance" in the making.

January was only a few days old when two Los Angeles County Supervisors underscored the importance elected officials are attaching to public trans-

portation. Supervisors Baxter Ward and Peter Schabarum, with the approval of their colleagues, announced their intentions to serve on the RTD Board of Directors—a first in the District's ten years of existence.

Then on January 21, the Supervisors authorized \$12.1 million in federal revenue sharing funds to be used to continue the Los Angeles County twenty-five-cent flat fare at least until the summer of 1976.

Service improvements continued. Bus frequency was doubled on heavily traveled Fairfax Avenue. A new park and ride lot was opened in Pasadena, providing express service to downtown Los Angeles. Nine new routes were launched in south-central Los Angeles.

New Grid Systems

High priority is being given to the implementation of two new grid systems, one in the San Fernando Valley and one in south-central Los Angeles.

The nine new routes in south-central Los Angeles are the first of a total of fourteen which will be in operation by March. When in complete operation, a grid system will be realized—buses available every 20 minutes on all major north-south and east-west streets. No resident of the area will be more than three blocks from a bus stop.

A similar program is scheduled for March in the San Fernando Valley. Seventeen new lines will be added and some of the present lines altered to align with the new grid system.

Another major program scheduled for this summer is the Santa Monica Freeway preferential lane project. Involved is the designation of one lane of the heavily-traveled freeway for buses and carpools.

Other bus projects include the expansion of the downtown mini-bus service, special buses to the beach in the summer, additional park and ride lots, and opening of the final station on the exclusive San Bernardino Busway.

1975 may also be the year when an alternative mode of transportation—one other than bus or auto—returns to Los Angeles.

Commuter Rail

Within the service area of the District are hundreds of miles of existing rail track and rights of way. Portions are the remains of what was once the 1200-mile Pacific Electric Railway, whose familiar "Red Cars" were a fixture in the area as recently as 1961. Other portions are currently in use by the area's major operating railroads, almost entirely for freight purposes.

Commuter possibilities exist on several of the routes. Currently, the RTD is pursuing legal action aimed at initiating service across the San Fernando Valley to Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. The Southern Pacific Railroad, citing disruption in freight services, is resisting attempts by both the District and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to start such activity.

Negotiations are continuing with the Santa Fe Railroad for a commuter line from the Anaheim-Santa Ana area to Union Station. Possible service along this route is being coordinated with Amtrak, which has jurisdiction.

1975 may also be remembered as the year when rapid transit finally got started in Los Angeles. Though the defeat of Proposition A in 1974 will make the getting of federal funds more difficult, those funds and a certain amount of state money from Proposition 5 are available to get a start.

District staff is presently at work on preparing recommendations for various possible starter routes, to be selected from within the 145-mile regional corridors adopted by the RTD board and other agencies last summer. These recommendations will be made public by early this summer.

Gas Rationing?

So 1975 promises to be another banner year in public transportation. As with the situation in 1974, the flow of events, both nationally and internationally, will have a great influence on the course public transportation will take. Dire predictions of gas rationing and/or higher fuel prices could impose an even greater burden on public transit, with the result that government at all levels will direct new resources and financial wherewithal into the field.

1974 is indeed a tough act to follow. But an audience of the public and its officials liked the show it saw in 1974. With this continued support and the strong possibility of dramatic auto disincentives by the middle of the year, the stage has been set. 1975 Los Angeles public transportation is well on its way towards topping last year's performance.

... and between this summer and the summer of 1976, the District will ...

... add more buses on existing routes with the goal of reducing waiting times to a minimum

... work with state officials to implement more exclusive freeway lanes on such freeways as the Hollywood, San Diego, Long Beach, Artesia, and Golden State

... evaluate the two new grid systems with the hope that the concept can be expanded to serve other communities

... open more park and ride facilities

... proceed, as funding allows, with rapid transit implementation

NEWS From Other Properties

Inflation has been blamed for a more than 50 per cent increase in bus prices. When the Chicago Transit Authority bought buses from General Motors in April of 1973, they cost \$41,686 apiece. Recently, GM was the low bidder on 500 new transit vehicles for Chicago — at \$64,768 each.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority is preparing to solicit bids on the first 175 of a total of 388 rapid transit cars for its 53-mile rapid rail system. Each car will seat 70 persons and will operate at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour.

After five years of controversy, the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority is a reality in northern Ohio. Its governing board will be made up of four representatives from Cleveland, three from the suburbs, and three from county commissioners. A ballot measure to help support the new organization, expected to call for a one-cent sales tax increase, will be submitted to the electorate in the near future.

In nearby Akron, a record 24-inch snowfall postponed the Metro Regional Transit Authority's "Try Metro Day," which was to feature 5-cent rides. When the streets were cleared and the event could be held on December 6, nearly three times as many patrons as normal turned out for a nickel ride.

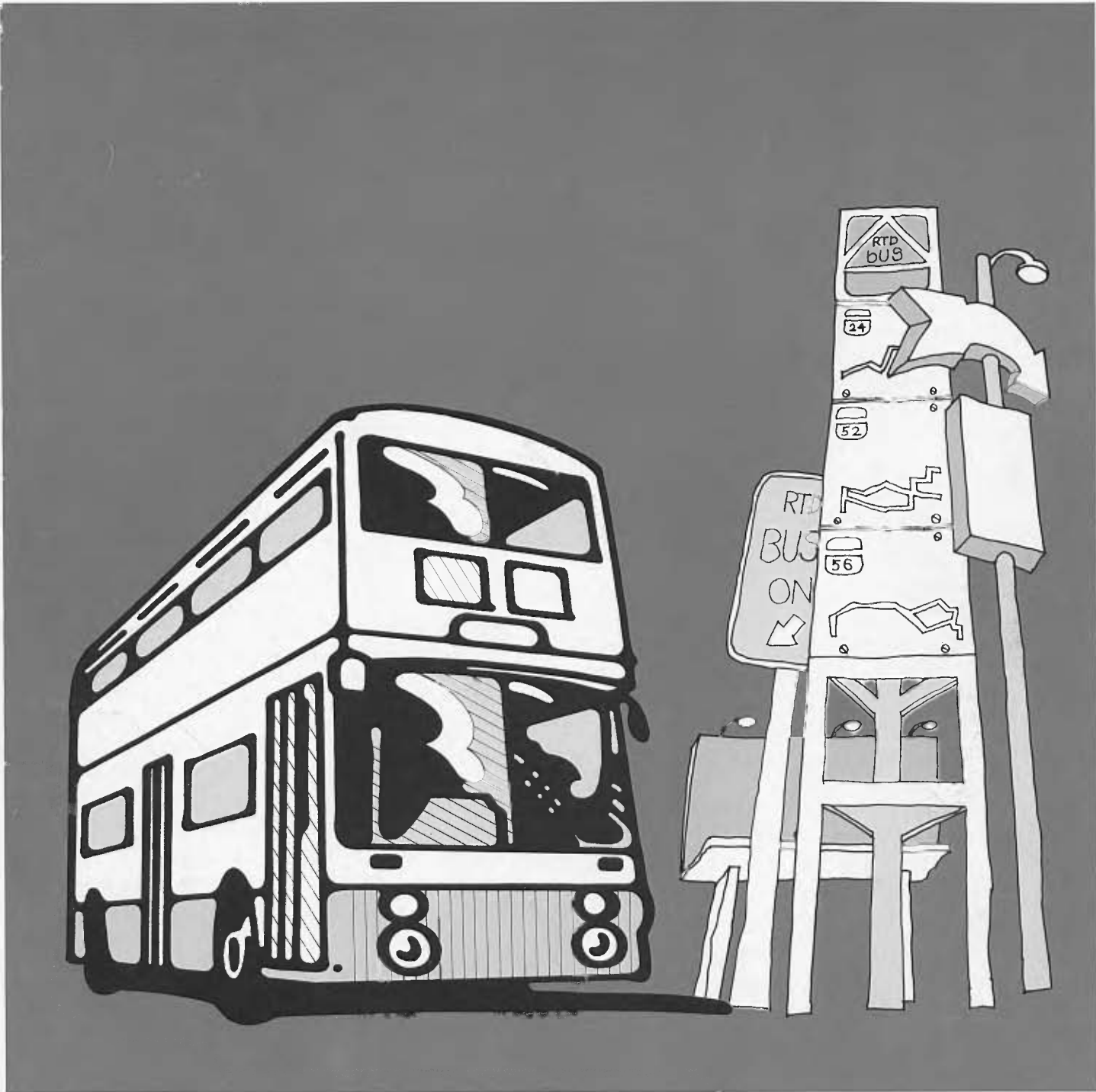
A recently launched "Night on the Town" plan in New York features a 75-cent bus ticket good for unlimited evening riding in Manhattan. The ticket is good on any of the 39 bus routes that crisscross the Island Monday through Saturday between 6 p.m. and 2 a.m.

Transit officials in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area said increased bus ridership last year led to saving more than a million gallons of gas. In addition, a Minnesota legislative commission was told that a fixed guideway system had the potential for cutting Twin Cities gasoline consumption by 500 million gallons a year by the turn of the century.

One entity is about to assume responsibility for public transportation in Dade County, Florida (Miami). In March, operations of the Coral Gables municipal system will be merged with the Metro Transit Agency. Coral Gables voters approved the merger of their 53-bus fleet into the larger agency in November.

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You Probably Didn't Know That...



... you can catch a bus, one of more than 2,000, at any of 23,000 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 3,560, and is backed by 745 mechanics, 385 clerks, and 571 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