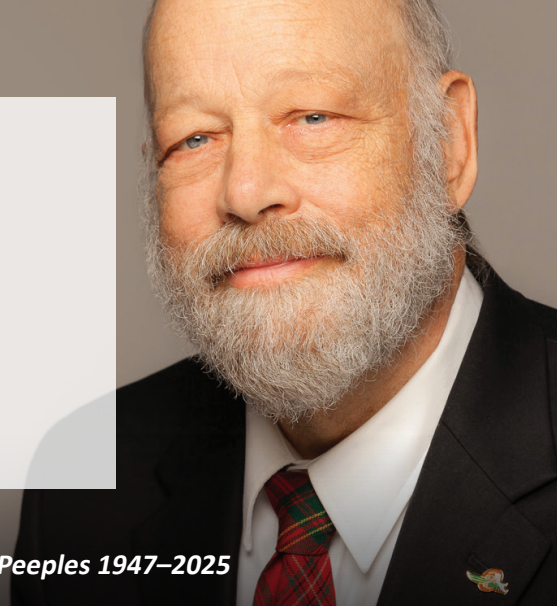


report

GENERAL MANAGER'S



Honoring H. E. Christian "Chris" Peeples 1947–2025

NBOs Hit the Streets as Realign Redefines Training

This August, the District unveiled the all-new Realign Service Changes, revamping 103 of 123 bus lines in an ambitious effort to right-size our bus network in the wake of the pandemic. These changes naturally ripple through Bus Operator recruitment and certification: service is now running at 85% of pre-pandemic levels, but in a hidden benefit, the District's Bus Operator workforce is fully staffed - a milestone we have not reached since before the pandemic.

continued on page 3



NBO 156

Left to Right: D. Baker, D. Belle, M. Bundy, J. Campos-Grijalva, C. Goodwin, S. Green, B. Harris Sr, P. Hernandez-Burgos, L. Hayes, R. Johnson, J. Lal, P. Suarez-Gelves, J. Munsong, S. Walker Jr, A. Wallace, M. Winn III, D. Torres (absent)



NBO 157

Front Row, Left to Right: M. Johnson, K. Washington, S. Key, T. Parks, A. Graham, T. Owens, R. Thelen
Back Row, Left to Right: M. Lopez, D. Bradford, S. Prendiville, J. Harmon, J. Cruz, R. Banks, D. Raju

'A hero for our planet has left us' – Remembering Director Chris Peeples

H. E. Christian Peeples, known to all simply as "Chris," died Thursday, August 7, 2025, in Oakland, California. He was 78. A self-described "political junkie and neighborhood activist," Chris leaves behind a towering legacy as a fearless advocate for equity, accessibility, and sustainable transit. For 28 years, he represented 1.5 million East Bay residents on the Board of Directors, becoming its longest-serving member and one of the most respected transit leaders in the nation.

Born Henry Edwin Christian Peeples on July 26, 1947, in Atlanta, Georgia, Chris embodied a lifelong commitment to public service shaped by his remarkable family history. His father, Major Henry C. Peeples, survived as a prisoner of war during WWII and lived to 102. His mother, Isabelle Silhol Peeples, was a French chemist who aided the Resistance during the war. From these roots of courage and resilience, Chris built his own path as an advocate unafraid to speak truth to power.

Educated in San Francisco's French English schools, Chris graduated from Riordan High School in 1966, where he first stepped into politics, student government, and debate. He earned a degree in Politics from UC Santa Cruz and later a law degree from Hastings College of the Law. A union brewer before practicing law, Chris carried the values of organized labor into every fight for justice, whether in the courtroom, in the neighborhood, or across the boardroom table.

continued on page 3

what's inside

- The Region's First-ever 60-foot FCEB
- Ambitious Plans for AC Transit's Incoming COO
- Why A Trunk Line Incentive Could Become a game changer

Family, friends, transit colleagues, and East Bay community members shared reflections on how their careers and lives were enriched by Chris's wisdom, generosity, and unwavering commitment to justice. Whether in the boardroom, on a picket line, or inside a neighborhood living room, each memory underscores how Chris not only fought for a better world but also inspired those around him to believe they could help build it too.

"He played Santa at our house for the neighborhood kids and our son. He had a lot of humanity..."

Frank Russo

"Amazing person, amazing board member. We wouldn't have hydrogen buses without his passion."

Mike Hursh

"Simply put, Chris was a good man and decent human being."

Dennis Wanken

"Having Chris part of your particular 'good trouble' guaranteed its success."

Rena Rickles

"Chris was a profoundly effective public servant and a good man."

Lateefah Simon

"...he was incredibly supportive of staff and the trials and tribulations it took to move things forward."

Linda Morris

"...he was a true captain of innovation and progress in advancing transit bus operations at ACT and beyond."

Paul Jenne

"He knew how to be an insider and outsider at the same time."

Dan Kalb

"Thank you, Chris, for your decades of service, advocacy and fighting for PEOPLE..."

Wladimir Wlassowsky

"He was truly devoted to AC Transit."

David Bailey



His four decades of activism spanned from grassroots organizing in Oakland to national leadership roles. He helped establish the Oakland Ethics Commission, guided neighborhood improvement efforts, and deepened ties between the Sierra Club and labor. But it was on the AC Transit Board where his vision reached its fullest expression.

Appointed in 1997 and reelected eight times, Chris transformed what it meant to be a board director. He championed the rights of riders, especially those who were transit-dependent, low-income, or disabled, insisting that public transportation is not a luxury but a lifeline. He pressed relentlessly for accessibility, ensuring buses worked for everyone, regardless of ability. He demanded equity in service planning, making sure the needs of the most vulnerable were not sacrificed to expedience. And long before “climate action” became political currency, he fought to secure AC Transit’s place as a global leader in zero emission fuel cell technology.

Colleagues and fellow advocates often described Chris as a “walking encyclopedia” of transit law, policy, and history. But his encyclopedic knowledge was always in service of people: the rider waiting at the bus stop, the Bus Operator behind the wheel, the future generations who deserve clean air and a livable planet. He was often the one to ask the toughest questions in meetings – not for theatrics, but because accountability mattered.

Chris is survived by his sister, Patricia G. Peeples of Bellevue, Washington, cousins in the United States and France, and a wide network of friends, colleagues, and admirers around the world.

Chris Peeples lived as he governed: with conviction, compassion, and courage. The East Bay has lost a true champion, and transit everywhere has lost one of its fiercest and most principled defenders.



“May his legacy continue to inspire all of those who knew him.”

Just as we’ve carefully and strategically right sized our bus lines, we are applying the same thoughtful approach to recruiting and certifying our Bus Operators. By adjusting future New Bus Operator (NBO) training schedules and class sizes in line with service levels, we ensure both efficiency and quality, keeping our workforce and our community on the road with confidence.

The road to a fully staffed fleet is moving fast: NBO 156 launched 17 newly certified professional Bus Operators at East Oakland–Division 4 in August, just days after the District rolled out the Realign Service Changes. Hot on their heels, NBO 157 - a smaller class of 14 - certified this month, splitting assignments between Emeryville and East Oakland to ensure every route in the service change is covered.

Now, with Realign activated, future training classes will be strategically paced to fill vacancies and maintain service reliability. Every route is now supported by a skilled, ready workforce, keeping the District on track and accelerating rider confidence in the network.



On the first day of school, Bus Operator-turned-Protector Victor Garcia drove the right bus, at the right time, for a lost boy.

Driving into Heroism – Bus Operator Saves the First Day of School

What should have been the triumphant close to a first day of school in the West Contra Costa County School District became the beginning of an unforgettable journey across miles of AC Transit service territory. At its center: a weary middle-schooler with an oversized backpack—and a watchful Division 4 Bus Operator named Victor Garcia.

“This is my first time riding the bus by myself,” said the undersized middle-schooler, weighed down by a brand-new oversized backpack and the weight of the world on a Line 51A bus. We won’t disclose the name of the weary minor who took every action to look brave until he made eye contact with Operator Garcia. “I gave him a little hug, and he started bawling. I then wanted to cry.”

But those tears were the release at the end of hours of vigilance and compassion by Garcia, a newly certified Operator who graduated from New Bus Operator Class 150 on February 19.

A Keen Eye Behind the Wheel

It was around 3:00 PM when Garcia, a Berkeley native who left Waymo to join AC Transit, pulled his 51A to a stop before the Posey Tube. A small boy slipped onboard, almost hidden by the passenger ahead of him. Something about him seemed off.

“When he got on the bus, he looked confused – like he didn’t know what to do,” Garcia remembered. “So, I kept my eye on him through the rearview mirror.”

By the time the bus reached Fruitvale BART, the boy was still sitting silently at the back. Approaching him gently, Garcia said, “Hey, little man, this is the end of the line.” That’s when the child confessed: he was supposed to get off at 12th and Broadway.

So, Garcia, who wears a smile as easily as his all-black ball cap, walked the boy to a waiting 51A, patiently explaining how to signal for his stop and advising his colleague to let the boy out at Broadway and 12th. He watched the bus glide away, hoping the boy’s journey was back on track. But fate wasn’t done testing Garcia’s instincts.



"When he got on the bus, he looked confused – like he didn't know what to do," Garcia remembered. "So, I kept my eye on him through the rearview mirror."

Protector Instinct

Several minutes later, after he restarted his run, Garcia spotted the boy again – at Santa Clara and Park – overwhelmed, backpack tugging at his shoulders, eyes full of defeat.

"I said, 'Little man, what happened?' He just looked at me like he wanted to cry and said, 'Oh, I got lost.'"

Garcia ushered him into the ADA seat at the front of the bus. "Just sit right here. Don't move." The boy explained he needed to get to Richmond and transfer to the 72. Red flags flew in Garcia's mind: this child was far from home, and far too vulnerable.

After rounding the corner toward the stop at Broadway and 12th, Garcia's protective instincts wouldn't let him drive on. Watching in his side mirror, he saw the boy walk away from the bus stop, heading in the wrong direction. Garcia hit the brake, stepped out, and called across the traffic: "Hey, little man, what are you doing?"

He immediately radioed OCC: "I have a lost kid." The response was clear: "Don't let him out of your sight."

A Bus Out of Service, A Community in Service

Apologizing to his passengers, Garcia explained the situation. Their response was instant and supportive: "Don't worry. We love what you're doing."

The 51A was now out of service, as Alameda County Sheriff's deputies rushed to the scene. For nearly an hour, Garcia called the boy's mother until she finally answered. She explained she was working in San Francisco, and his disabled father couldn't retrieve him. Deputies took over, relieving the boy of his oversized backpack and an express ride home to Richmond.

Before leaving, the boy confided to Garcia, "This is my first time riding the bus by myself," "I gave him a little hug, and he started bawling. I then wanted to cry,"

The Right Place at the Right Time

An incredibly modest Garcia, whose body art and large physical stature belie his nurturing and protective instinct, refuses the title of hero. "I don't see it as being a hero. I see it as being there for the little kid."

Since the incident, he's made it a practice to notice more: "Now I look at passengers' faces and their physical reactions. If I see something, I ask, 'Excuse me, are you on the right bus?'"

For one lost child on the first day of school, the right bus was driven by the right Operator. And with Protector Garcia behind the wheel, riders across the East Bay can be assured: someone is always watching out for them.



Watching in his side mirror, he saw the boy walk away from the bus stop, heading in the wrong direction. Garcia hit the brake and took the bus out of service.

Lawmakers Greenlight Senate Bill 63 – Funding Heads to Next Phase

AC Transit applauds California lawmakers for supporting the Connect Bay Area Act (Senate Bill 63), which creates a Public Transit Revenue Measure for five Bay Area counties and now moves to collecting voter signatures.

If enough signatures are gathered, the measure will qualify for the November 2026 ballot, giving voters the opportunity to decide on a sales tax of half a cent in Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and San Mateo counties, and one cent in the City and County of San Francisco.

The Public Transit Revenue Measure would create a sustainable funding stream that protects AC Transit and other Bay Area transit systems from service reductions that disproportionately impact transit-dependent riders, limit workforce mobility, increase traffic congestion, and degrade regional air quality.

“Despite fare adjustments, significant internal cost-cutting measures, and limiting hiring, our transit district is using reserves this fiscal year to cover a \$41.5 million deficit,” said AC Transit Board President Diane Shaw. “SB 63 offers a beacon of hope during these financial challenges. By providing new revenue, it has the potential to prevent unprecedented service cuts, as our fiscal crisis is projected to worsen, with a \$74 million shortfall forecasted in fiscal year 2026–27.”

More than 3 million riders rely on AC Transit each month. Last month, AC Transit implemented the Realign bus network, making changes to 103 of 123 bus lines – 85% of the network – through frequency adjustments, the introduction of new lines, and the discontinuation of some routes to maximize limited resources.

Realign is designed with equity at its core to right-size the network to hybrid and remote work trends, shifting ridership patterns, and ongoing fiscal challenges. Without the support of SB 63, AC Transit could face service reductions of up to 37%, operating at less than half of pre-pandemic levels – a scale of service that is simply not sustainable.

SB 63 would work in tandem with the proposed Bay Area Transit Bridge Loan. It’s called a “bridge loan” because it closes the gap between the current funding shortfall and the more reliable revenue source anticipated from SB 63. This emergency \$750 million loan package requires repayment by AC Transit and other Bay Area transit systems. The goal of the bridge loan is to prevent an immediate service collapse. If voters approve SB 63, it will provide the dedicated revenue source needed to repay the loan and fund transit into the future. Both measures now await Governor Newsom’s approval.

AC Transit extends deep appreciation to the members of our transit district’s state delegation. In particular, we would like to thank State Senators Scott Wiener and Jesse Arreguin. Their combined authorship and unwavering commitment were instrumental in advancing this regional revenue measure. Our transit district is equally grateful for Governor Gavin Newsom’s leadership and partnership. Together, we are working on long-term funding solutions that will strengthen our region’s transit and enhance the daily lives of millions.



SB 63 would work in tandem with the proposed Bay Area Transit Bridge Loan.

From Assembly Line to East Bay Streets - First 60-Foot FCEB Is Arriving

When the world slowed to a near standstill in early 2020, most businesses shuttered their doors. The East Bay's streets emptied, and yet the District kept moving. Not just moving riders but moving innovation forward. While traffic dipped and schedules contracted, our commitment to zero emission transit accelerated.

In those quiet months of 2020, we put New Flyer's first-of-its-kind 60-foot demonstration hydrogen fuel cell electric bus (FCEB) through its paces. From East Bay inclines to shifting microclimates, from passenger capacity to every mechanical nuance, our maintenance team – the actual authors of the zero emission bus maintenance manual – left no detail unchecked. A full year into the pandemic and our test environment, the demo FCEB proved worthy of our exacting standards.

This month, that careful preparation comes to life: the 60-foot articulated FCEB rolls off New Flyer's Anniston, Alabama assembly line, and staff traveled on site to witness what's known in manufacturing as the first article inspection - the very first bus to roll off the assembly line. This is the first of nine buses headed to the District.

Members of the District's Maintenance team were there with sharp eyes and high standards. Every detail mattered: the signature green seats had to be installed just right, the branded flooring perfectly aligned, and the zero emission livery wrapped without flaw. Just as critical, the Bus Operator's controls on the New Flyer 60-foot bus had to mirror the familiar setup across the entire fleet, ensuring consistency and safety for the operators.

This milestone is about more than checking boxes. It's the foundation for ensuring that each bus is manufactured to AC Transit's exact specifications. Once the Maintenance team completes this first round of inspections, responsibility shifts to the District's resident quality assurance inspector – a third-party professional stationed onsite with New Flyer. Their role: to uphold quality control, verifying every bus



The first of nine FCEBs, not yet wrapped in ZEB livery, rolled off the Alabama assembly line as a District Maintenance team member inspected the fits and finishes.

meets AC Transit's standards before it begins its journey to the Bay Area.

While this 60-foot FCEB is a first of its kind for AC Transit, the District is no stranger to New Flyer's innovation. Ten first-generation FCEBs joined the fleet in 2018, followed by 20 second-generation models in 2022. This latest procurement builds on that foundation, advancing the District's Zero Emission Bus Transition Plan.

The delivery process is as precise as the inspection. Each new 60-foot bus will arrive by flatbed truck through phased deliveries, culminating in the final arrival this December. Once onsite, the buses undergo finishing touches – installation of fareboxes, Clipper readers, CAD-AVL configuration, and a few other essential fittings – before being ready for service.

The new New Flyer FCEB 60-footers replace nine retired Van Hool articulated buses, ensuring a one-for-one replacement. Assigned to Division 2, these buses will join the District's Clean Corridors Program, bringing zero emission service to key routes and communities across the East Bay.

From first inspection to final deployment, the journey of these buses marks another leap toward AC Transit's zero emission future – one clean corridor at a time.



After the Maintenance team finishes the initial inspections, responsibility passes to the District's resident quality assurance inspector - a third-party professional embedded on site with New Flyer.



During final assembly, every detail counted - even ensuring the signature green seats were perfectly installed.

AC Transit's New COO Aaron Vogel Embarks on Bold Plan

When Aaron Vogel joined AC Transit as Chief Operating Officer in early September, he didn't waste a moment settling in. The former COO of IndyGo, Indianapolis's transit provider, Vogel immediately launched his signature "30 Routes in 30 Days" initiative – a hands-on plan to ride 30 different bus lines end-to-end in his first month on the job.

"The best way to understand our network is from the seat of the bus," Vogel explains. "Riding the lines gives me a micro-level understanding of service, neighborhoods, and even landmarks."

True to his word, Vogel spent evenings in the Operations Control Center (OCC) observing Controllers as they managed traffic, rider demand, and real-time adjustments to keep buses on schedule. "Spending time in the Operations Control Center provides a macro view of our dynamic operations."

Vogel's IndyGo experience spans a wide spectrum of transit operations – Customer Service, Facility and Fleet Maintenance, Life Safety, Paratransit, Performance Analytics, Security, Service Planning, Training, and Transportation. Bringing that breadth to AC Transit, the "30 Routes in 30 Days" program is as much about engaging frontline staff as it is about learning the network.

"Meeting Bus Operators directly gives me insight into day-to-day realities—meal and rest periods, bathroom access, and operational challenges," Vogel says. "I also want to hear from riders themselves, unfiltered, about their experience." After just two weeks, he reports he's already halfway through the plan.

Operations are only part of Vogel's focus. His complementary initiative, "90 Employees in 90 Days," underscores his commitment to building relationships across the District. In his first two, Vogel is touring every division, connecting with staff and meeting with ATU Local 192 representatives.

Vogel believes to lead effectively, you must see the system from the ground up and meet the people who make it run.

As Vogel continues his 30-in-30 and 90-in-90 initiatives, the East Bay transit community can expect a COO who prioritizes experience, engagement, and reliability.

I want to understand the District's strengths, areas for growth, and how I can support employees in their roles.



The "90 Employees in 90 Days" initiative highlights Vogel's dedication to building connections throughout the District.



"Meeting Bus Operators directly gives me insight into day-to-day realities—meal and rest periods, bathroom access, and operational challenges," Vogel says.



Vogel has kicked off his signature "30 Routes in 30 Days" initiative — a hands-on effort to ride 30 different bus lines from end to end during his first month on the job.

Is AC Transit's Pilot the Breakthrough for Perfect Service?

For transit agencies across the country, achieving the “gold standard” of high service operated (SO) and on-time performance (OTP) - getting nearly every bus out the door and on schedule – is no easy feat. It’s almost like chasing a unicorn. The main challenge? Bus operator shortages.

What’s behind the shortage? That’s as varied as the human resources voices in the conversation: delivery and gig jobs pay more and offer flexible hours, living costs are sky-high in big cities, new hires face unpredictable schedules, the job can feel risky, and a wave of veteran operators is reaching retirement age or the so-called “silver tsunami.”

In the San Francisco Bay Area’s East Bay, where AC Transit operates, juggling SO, OTP, and operator shortages is a daily balancing act. Our HR experts say it’s not one thing driving the challenge, but the perfect storm of all factors colliding. And every June, ahead of fall signups, the strain of this troublesome trio hits hardest on 13 key trunk lines – the high-frequency routes carrying the heaviest passenger loads – pushing both the network and operators to their limits.

To gauge the impact, AC Transit looked back to 2023 and analyzed trips not operated (TNO) on those 13 trunk lines, revealing shortages in bus operators, canceled trips, missed timepoints, and late relief. When the focus was narrowed to operator unavailability, the numbers were eye-opening: 1,248 TNOs in 2023, with only a slight improvement to 1,162 in 2024.

Then came the breakthrough in 2025. AC Transit rolled out the Trunkline Incentive Program (TIP) pilot, a bold attempt to tackle the SO challenge head-on – as improving SO directly drives on-time performance. Following the launch of the TIP pilot, TNOs, resulting from unavailability, plummeted 54% to just 536. This milestone is particularly noteworthy because it has been achieved as AC Transit simultaneously right-sized its bus network by updating, debuting, or discontinuing 104 of 123 bus lines via its newly launched Realign Service Changes.

Working with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 192, TIP offers operators on the 13 trunk lines a \$2-per-hour bonus with the goal of maintaining a 98% cumulative SO target during the pilot. It’s more than extra pay; it’s a collaborative commitment for real, measurable reliability.

TIP is showing that as recruitment marches forward, the equally herculean challenge of service operated, and on-time performance might finally have a solution. What once seemed like an uphill struggle is showing every indication of a win for operators, riders, and reliability across the bus network.



Sky-high living costs, gig pay, and retirements were the perfect storm. But AC Transit's TIPs got creative to keep bus operations on schedule.



Trips not operated plunged 54% as AC Transit's innovative Trunkline Incentive Program pilot strengthens reliability and proves a win-win for frontline operators.

HR at Your Fingertips: D6 Launches Next-Gen Kiosk Pilot

The cork message board has hung in offices and classrooms for more than a century, quietly holding memos, reminders, and notes-to-self. By World War II, the humble pin-up board was as common as chrome tailfins, Brylcreem, and poodle skirts. But while cars, fashion, and even the way we communicate have evolved dramatically, the bulletin board has remained virtually unchanged. Until now.

On August 4th, Hayward–Division 6 took a quantum leap into the future with the launch of the digital HR Kiosk. Gone are the days of cluttered cork boards and missed messages – replaced with a sleek, iPad-powered system that delivers information in crisp 1080p across a 42-inch widescreen monitor.

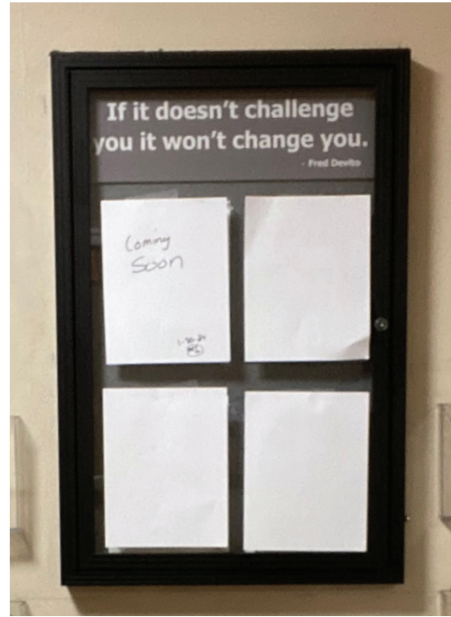
The smart HR Kiosk, located just outside the upstairs Gilley Room, is designed to streamline communication, ensuring that critical updates reach frontline employees in real time. Here's how it works:

- On the kiosk's widescreen monitor, looping video messages spotlight the full range of services available to staff – from benefits resources to the Employee Assistance Program and more.
- Each video invites employees to act, guiding them to the kiosk's iPad interface.
- With just a tap on the kiosk's iPad, staff can dive straight into SharePoint or PeopleSoft, apply for District programs, or complete essential forms – all in one streamlined hub.

The smart HR Kiosk is the product of a cross-departmental collaboration between HR, Facilities, IT, and Transportation. The pilot will run through the close of November's Open Enrollment, with a built-in survey capturing employee feedback on usability and satisfaction.

If the pilot proves successful, the kiosks could be deployed across other high-traffic employee hubs – Divisions, the General Offices, CMF, and TEC – creating a unified network. With expansion comes another advantage: IT will be able to push updates instantly to every kiosk District-wide.

More than a digital bulletin board, the HR Kiosk is a transformative step in keeping staff engaged, informed, and empowered.



A glance at D6's current message boards makes it clear why employees often overlook important messages.



With a simple tap on the kiosk's iPad, staff can instantly access SharePoint or PeopleSoft, apply for District programs, and complete key forms.

Where Riders, Service, and Community Connect



Players from the Oakland Roots Sports Club give an assist, not on the pitch, but outside the Oakland Coliseum for a one-of-a-kind AC Transit-Roots SC marketing campaign in late spring.



AC Transit's minibus – fresh off its Baller's Transit Day win over BART – rolled with staff in the Piedmont's 58th annual 4th of July Parade, as staff promoted the District to kids and kids at heart, with our iconic stickers.



AC Transit joined back-to-school events in West Contra Costa schools, including Richmond's Kennedy High, to share information on the Student Transit Pass Program and Realign service changes.



During their zero emission tour of Emeryville-Division 2, staff from US Senator Alex Padilla learned about AC Transit's urgent need for sustainable funding to address the fiscal deficit and support the growth of our zero emission bus network.

Human Resources Personnel Report

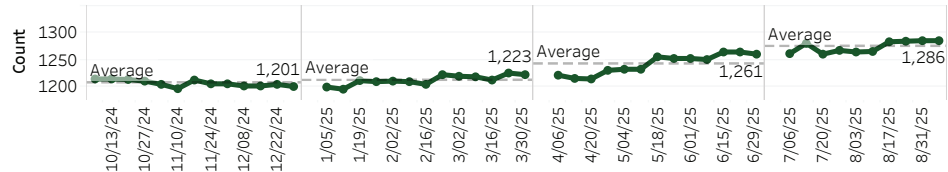
OPEN POSITIONS | Bus Operator: [Approved positions - Division workforce] as of September 7, 2025

Approved Positions	Division Workforce	Open Positions	Open Positions (%)
1,250	1,286	-36	-2.9%

Division Workforce

1,286

[as of: September 7, 2025]

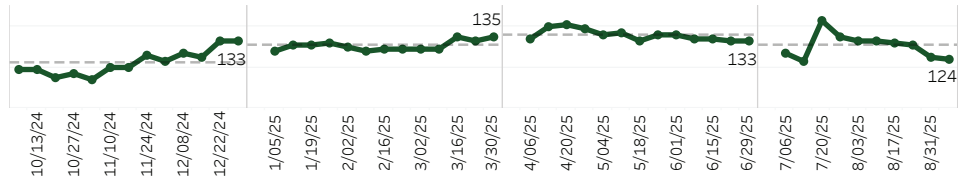


Long-term Leave

124

[as of: September 7, 2025]

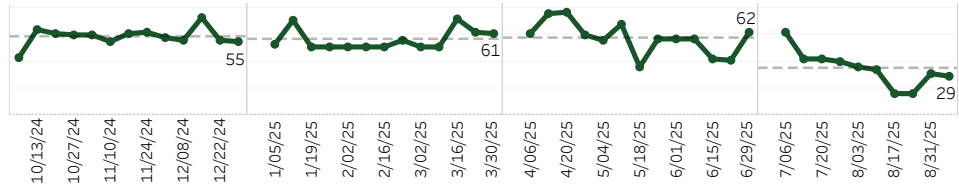
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Training

29

[as of: September 7, 2025]



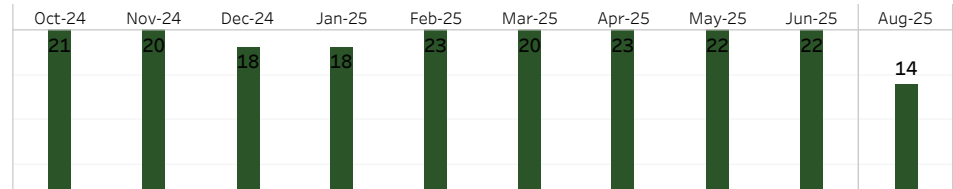
MONTHLY | Bus Operator: Hiring & Workforce Trends

WORKFORCE CHANGE

Hiring

14

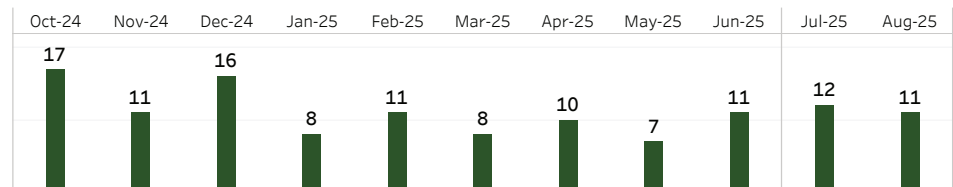
[YTD FY 2026 | August]



Separations

-11

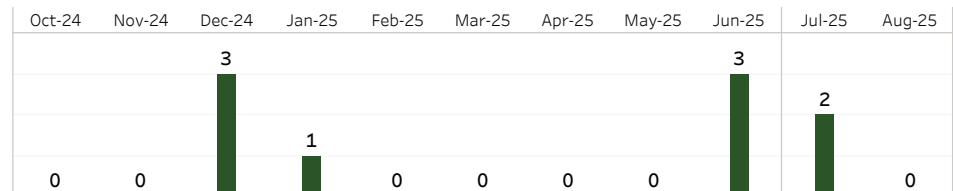
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Promotions

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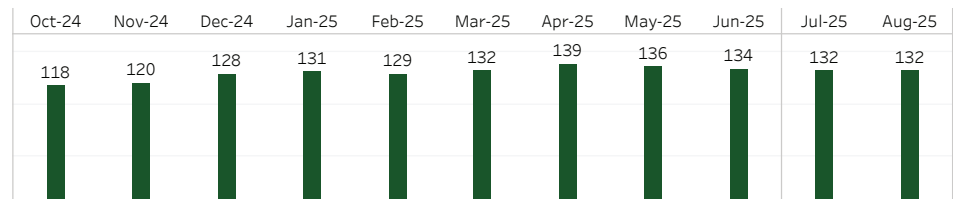
[YTD FY 2026 | August]



Long-Term Leave

+3

[YTD FY 2026 August]



AUG 2025 NET GAIN: +6