

TRANSITIONS IN TRANSIT: SELLING A ROUTE CHANGE



Between the time AC Transit was established in 1959 and when it overhauled its bus routes in 1986, the populations of the two counties it served (Alameda and Contra Costa) grew by 44% and the routes were no longer efficient. As AC Transit revamped its routes, it called on Fern Tiger Associates to help explain the change.

FTA had produced a multimedia celebration of AC Transit's first 25 years just three years prior to this project and had become familiar with the inner workings of the organization, riding on buses, learning the system, and getting acquainted with drivers, administrators, and switchboard operators. Thus, FTA was familiar with riders' attitudes and had a good grasp of residents' comfort with existing routes (many of which had been based on a century-old trolley system) and apparent apprehension about having to learn new routes, which would rely more heavily on transfers.

So that the values of the new system could be demonstrated to community, neighborhood, and service groups, FTA produced a multi-screen slide show and accompanying publications. Titled "*Whose Route is it Anyway?*," the program explained and highlighted the advantages of the change for public transit riders and for the two-county community, helping to garner support and understanding for the route revisions.

For AC Transit's 25th Anniversary, the bus system called on FTA to produce a chronicle and celebration of its history – a project which required intensive time with diverse transit staff. The telephone operators were among the most unforgettable, providing memorized bus information easily, rarely consulting maps or schedules. Their function has since been replaced by an automated website, the "Take Transit Trip Planner."



AC TRANSIT is the East Bay bus system serving Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Its service area stretches from San Pablo to Fremont.