

Shuttle bus routes studied to check needs schedules,

A study is underway to determine whether changes are needed in Texas A&M University's off-campus shuttle bus system. Transportation Enterprises Inc., which supplies buses for the University, is conducting the survey.

The system has received complaints about time schedules and available space from students this semester.

The system uses 27 buses which run seven routes. There are three routes east of the campus, three south and one north.

University Police said that 6,647 shuttle bus passes were sold this semester. In an attempt to ensure that the bus system will serve pass holders adequately, Robert Key, general manager of TEI, said it has supplied its drivers with count sheets so that they can record the number of students riding the different bus routes each day. These reports will be given to E. C. Oates, chairman of the University Shuttle Bus Operations Committee, for examination.

Key said this will also aid the company in determining which times of the day that ridership is greatest.

One problem occurred on the Villa Maria route north of Texas A&M last Thursday afternoon, when a breakdown of the bus caused about 50 students to wait for almost an hour and a half to get home.

One student who rides the route had waited for an hour when he called TEI. He said they told him

the bus had broken down, but was repaired and back on route.

The student said he has had other problems with the bus system, such as trying to get to his early morning classes.

He said the buses serving his apartment complex are sometimes so crowded that three people must sit in each seat, with passengers standing in the aisles.

The student said he felt if the buses ran 15 minutes apart instead of at longer time intervals, there would not be so many riders waiting at one time and the buses would be less crowded.

The same student said bus passes have been checked on his route only twice this year. He said that possibly some people have not paid for passes and are taking up extra space.

Key said that the bus breakdown on the Villa Maria route was taken care of as quickly as possible.

"When we have a major mechanical problem with a bus, we send a replacement out immediately, but in this case the problem was minor and it would have taken longer to get a substitute from Bryan than to have a mechanic fix the bus."

"The bus service has not been dependable for the past two weeks," said Sylvia West, who rides the Hol-

leman route. She said that recently the buses have been running on 30-minute intervals and makes many students late for classes.

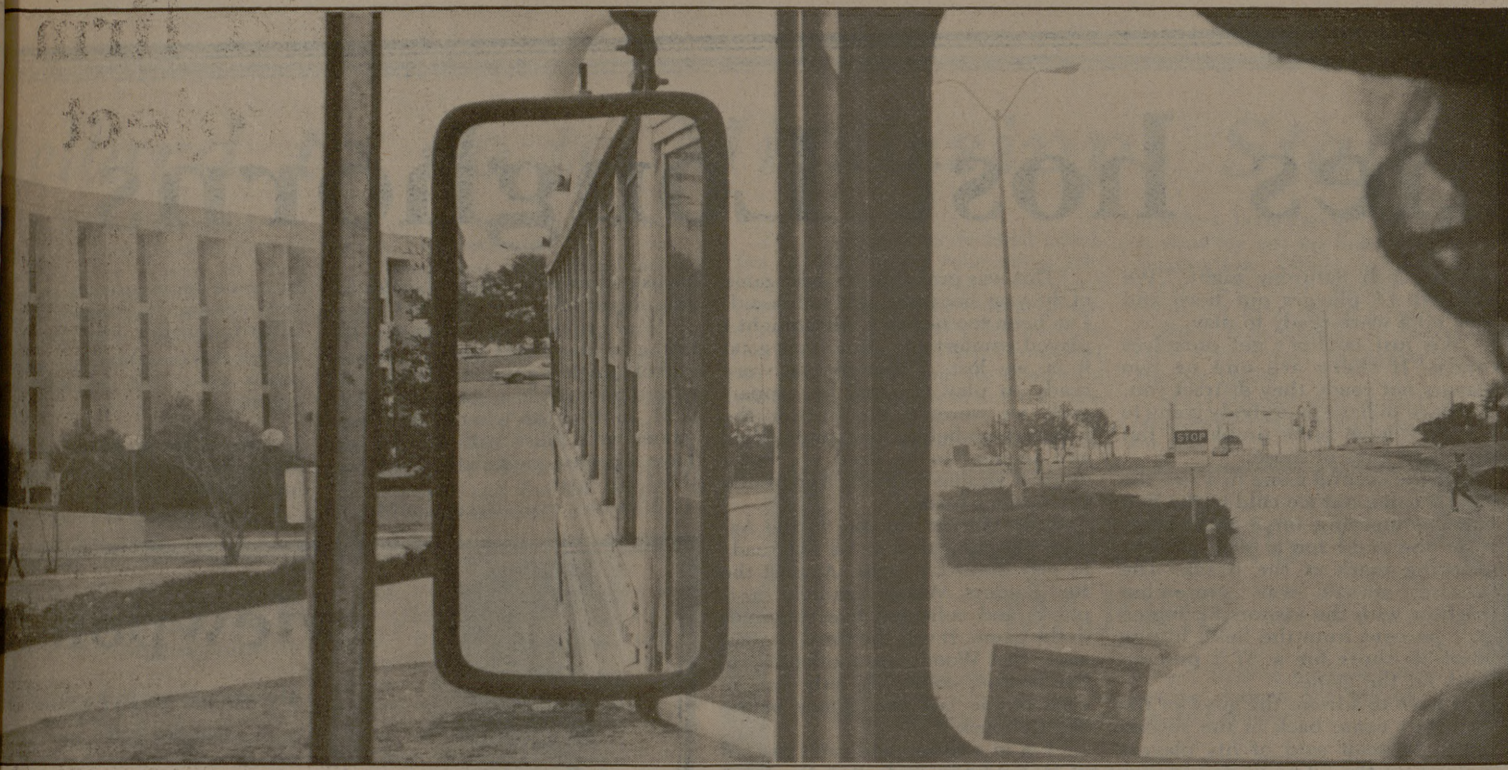
Drue Townsend, who rides the Puryear route, and Brad McJunkin, who is on the Anderson Parkway route, both said that the buses have been on time lately but are crowded at all times of the day.

Paul Huppertz, a route 2818 rider, said "The buses are crowded, but I haven't had many problems getting to class on time."

"The buses nearly always run on 15-minute intervals and I have never had a problem finding a seat or getting to class on time," said Karin Knapp, who rides the Scarlett O'Hara route.

Other students say they are satisfied with the bus service.

Key said, "TEI is trying to find out where the greatest need for the buses is, and we may rearrange our schedules if changes need to be made in the system."



Battalion photo by Lynn Blanco

only drivers generally get this view of shuttle buses, which are now getting a closer look from other quarters. Transportation Enterprises Inc., which supplies and manages the buses for Texas A&M's off-campus shuttle system, is conducting a survey to see if routes or schedules should be re-

arranged. The University is also consulting in the study. The company has also taken a closer look at the condition of the buses, and the new manager reports that extensive work was done over the semester break.

Conditions 'deplorable'

Buses, office overhauled

By MARK HANCOCK
Battalion Reporter

Transportation Enterprises Inc., which provides Texas A&M University with shuttle bus service, has undergone management and personnel changes in an effort to turn around a situation new manager Robert Key termed "deplorable."

The buses were generally in poor shape at the end of the fall semester due to the lack of necessary maintenance, Key said.

Key said there hasn't been much maintenance during the past year, but for major failures when repairs were obviously necessary. He said the buses are in good shape because of extensive overhaul during the semester break.

Key now has three mechanics and two mechanics — and during the break we spent between \$10,000 and \$12,000 solely on maintenance. Key said, Tony Burnett, TEI's shop foreman in Bryan, said during the two months before the break, TEI spent \$19,000 on repairs.

Key said that repairs on the buses included brake jobs (which 65 percent of the diesel buses needed), electrical system work, fuel tank cleanings and other repairs such as replacing wheel bearings and installing new batteries.

According to recent complaints from students on the buses, Key said, "We have no fuel leaks, but if the fuel is sitting on an incline, fuel may leak through the filler cap. The original straps that hold the tanks in place were weak, so we have modified them to keep any breaks from occurring."

Key also said that all the buses were thoroughly checked and four new fuel hoses, tank straps and brackets. He said these "deplorable" conditions were the result of the previous management of Bryan's TEI and the at-

titudes of the head office in Austin, Key said. "The attitude was to run the buses until they wouldn't run anymore — and then fix them," he said.

Scott Keller, president of TEI, said, "Obviously the former person in charge in Bryan wasn't doing the job or he would still be there. It's possible that we were not totally informed about the situation, because I'm genuinely interested in the condition of the buses in Bryan. If the present manager doesn't do the job we'll let him go."

E. C. Oates, chairman of the University Shuttle Bus Operations Committee, said that he is presently "pleased with the personnel and service" at TEI.

"It's the service we buy and I think we're getting a bargain," Oates said.

Oates said that the condition of the buses at the end of the fall semester was from gradual deterioration. He said that although TEI might not have been running full strength everyday, all day long, he was still pleased with the service Texas A&M had received, "but of course we're always hoping for better service."

"The peak travel periods are the most important times for the shuttle service," Oates said, "and as long as they (TEI) provide consistently at these times, we will be satisfied."

Key said that he should be able to improve the quality of service to

Texas A&M substantially this semester and during the coming year with a preventative maintenance program that he and Burnett started last fall. Burnett said, "I don't think we will have any major breakdowns like transmission or engine failure more than once a month."

Key said that the buses have been running almost 100 percent of the time this semester, except for a few instances when drivers didn't show up for work.

"We depend on our drivers to give us information about the running condition on the buses," Key said. "Our drivers give us a report every afternoon and when they complain we do our best to fix the bus. In the past this just wasn't so."

The drivers agreed that the buses were in good shape this semester.

Key said that the change of attitude within his company is the

reason that Texas A&M can expect to receive "at least as good or better service than the other Texas colleges receive."

Burnett said, "I know where Austin is in their maintenance programs and I believe at present we are doing a better job. I've had real good results with the Austin parts warehouse and have no problem at all getting parts for the buses over here."

Key said, "We have 29 buses and 27 routes to fill everyday we run. I believe in paying for what you get, and a person can't beat paying two bits a day to ride our buses."

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