

Contraflow travel may ease freeway crunch

United Press International
HOUSTON — For \$5 a day, beginning Tuesday, traffic-weary commuters can bypass morning and evening rush hours on Interstate 45 by leaving their cars in the suburbs and riding multipassenger vehicles to and from downtown on a new, speedy Contraflow Lane.

The 9.6-mile Contraflow Lane route, longer than the San Francisco or New York routes begun in the early 1970s, will be the exclusive domain of Metro Transit Authority buses, suburban buses, airport coaches and certified vanpools able to carry 12 passengers.

Autos are forbidden from slipping inside the designated against-the-flow lanes and MTA Director Barry M. Goodman said the system could reduce the number of cars on the North Freeway by 2,000 daily while providing transportation for 2,500 persons initially.

The cost for bus riders will be \$5 a day, roundtrip, or \$60 per month for a pass providing unlimited use of the MTA system. There is no charge for vanpools.

Because of the dangers posed by narrowly separated lanes of oncoming traffic moving at freeway speeds, the MTA tested the \$1.8 million system for weeks and required drivers to enroll in safety courses before scheduling the opening of the lane.

Specifically, the Contraflow lane is an added inside express lane from the outbound side of the freeway during the morning rush hour and the opposite, inside inbound lane during the afternoon rush hour. During normal rush hours, 70 percent of the traffic moves in the same direction. The borrowed lane comes from the side of the freeway carrying 30 percent of the traffic.

"It's the first (MTA) public transportation project that will provide a time savings to those that will use it," Goodman said. "Because Contraflow allows the buses and vanpools to bypass the congestion in the peak hour flow and because we're so auto-oriented, we feel the only way to attract large numbers of people to public transportation is to make it a time-saving venture as well as having the other attributes of being less costly and more comfortable."

"Additionally Contraflow is a relatively low cost improvement. If successful, it could pave the way for construction of exclusive, totally separated busways on our major corridors."

Aside from construction delays (funds were requested by the city in 1975 before voters approved creation of the MTA last year) and the biggest problem was finding the buses to handle the increased traffic. The MTA, plagued by mechanical failures that require keep 25 percent of the system's vehicles awaiting repairs, simply did not have the vehicles to lend to the Contraflow program.

"That's true," Goodman said. "But, the Contraflow project was as other extended outlying services are going to be provided by private transportation carriers under contract with MTA so that MTA has power, equipment and facilities and not required to serve Contraflow and the other outlying services."

"The use of private enterprises (leased buses) enables us to expand our service under contract much sooner than if we had to wait for our own resources to develop to this point," he said.

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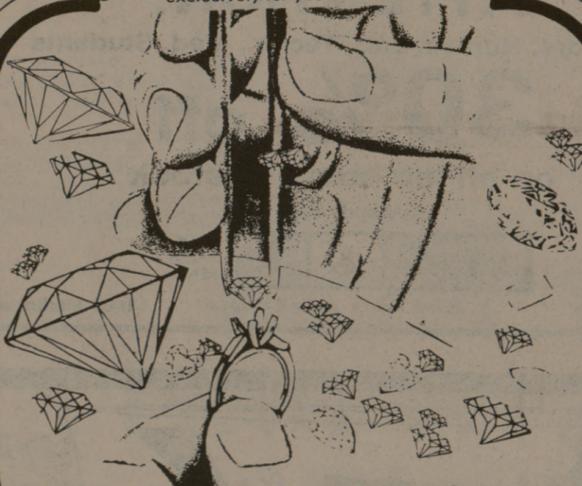
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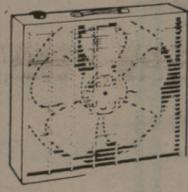
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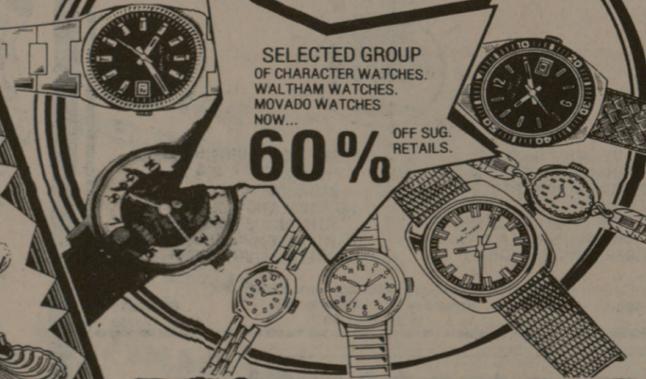


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Beware of mail-order cigarettes

United Press International
AUSTIN — Comptroller Bob Bullock said Tuesday Texans face more than a health hazard if they buy mail-order cigarettes and state taxes are not paid on the cigarettes.

Bullock said advertisements in the state recently have offered mail-order cigarettes and other tobacco products on which state taxes have not been paid.

Purchasers are required to pay the office \$1.85 a carton for taxes on cigarettes they order from out of state and may be liable for a \$1.85 a carton penalty if the tax is not reported immediately, Bullock said.

The advertised price of the cigarettes, plus penalty and interest works out to about 85 cents a pack for the mail order cigarettes, he said. Federal law requires that out-of-state firms provide the complete information office with a list of Texas residents who purchase cigarettes outside the state.

"Consumers who buy mail-order cigarettes have to pay the tax and we have to get it out and chase them down to get it, they'll have to pay the penalty," Bullock said.

State law makes it a felony to possess more than 10,000 untaxed cigarettes — 50 cartons.

Davis expected to take stand in murder trial

United Press International
FORT WORTH — Two weeks of tedious background testimony ended Tuesday in the murder trial of millionaire T. O. Davis and prosecutors said they were prepared to put their star witness on the stand next.

Davis McCrory, a friend and employee of Davis who turned him in when he allegedly began demanding the deaths of friends and associates was scheduled to testify Wednesday.

Along with McCrory's testimony, prosecutors were expected to play tape recordings and show films of Davis and McCrory meeting in a restaurant parking lot. During the meeting Davis allegedly paid for the faked death of District Judge J. E. Eidsen.

Davis is charged with demanding that McCrory hire a professional killer to do away with Eidsen, who presided over Davis' divorce. McCrory claims that when Davis began talking about the murder he contacted authorities.

Eidsen's death was faked by the FBI but he was never harmed.

Since testimony in the trial began two weeks ago Eidsen and three FBI agents have testified. Both prosecutors and defense attorneys have tediously poured over details of meetings and the kind of equipment planted on McCrory.

Eidsen testified about the raffle he made in the Davis divorce, which the state contends were unfavorable to the industrialist — thus giving him a reason for wanting Eidsen dead.

The FBI agents, Ron Janning, Jerry Hubble and Joseph Gray, testified about how they met with McCrory and secretly wired him with recorders for his meetings with Davis.

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