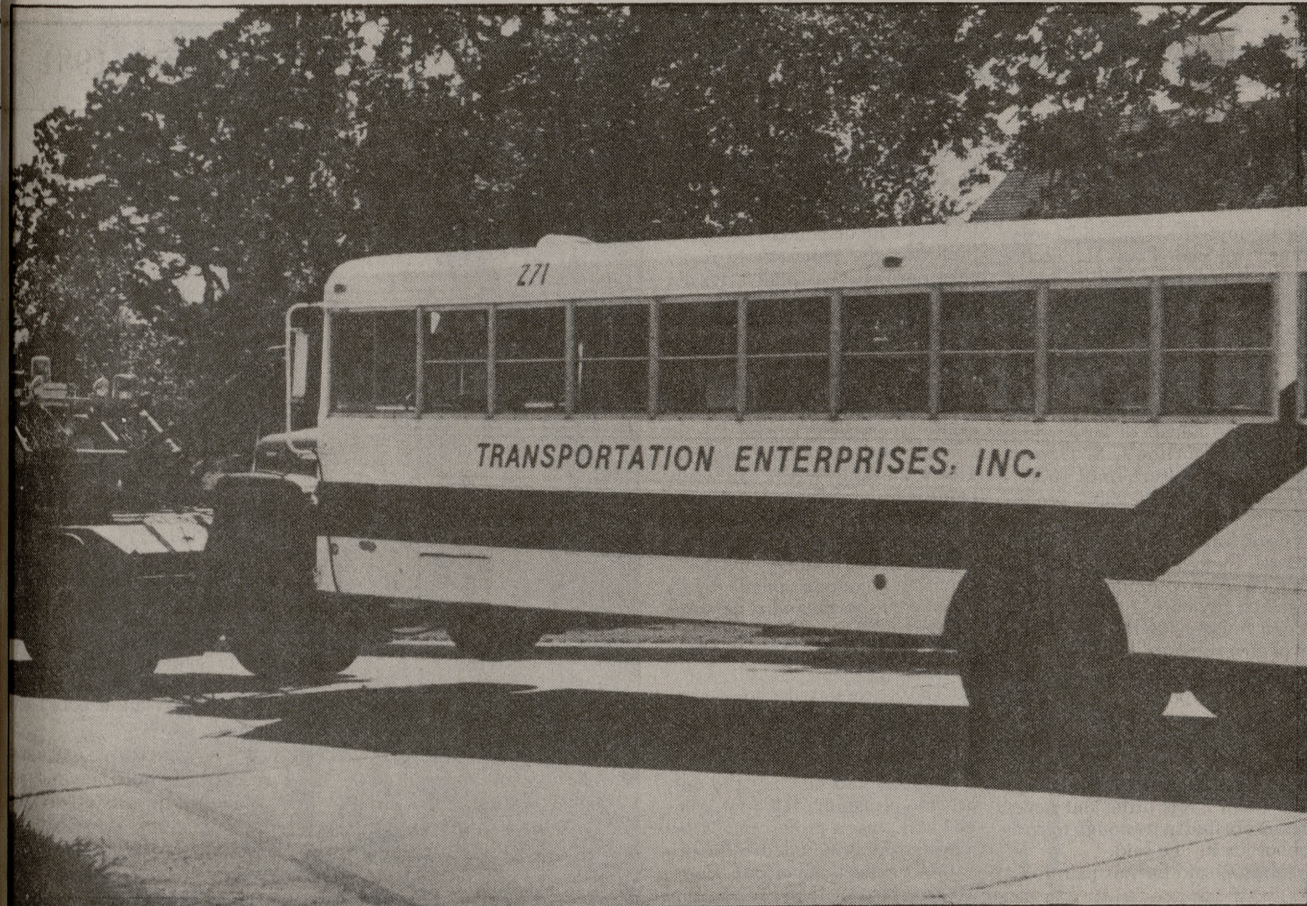


Local

A&M receiving bids for bus manufacturer



Staff photo by Brian Tate

A broken down shuttle bus is towed from the Texas A&M campus. Mechanical difficulties with buses have brought

complaints from students and led the University to establish its own shuttle system beginning in Fall 1982.

By JOHN BRAMBLETT
Battalion Reporter
Texas A&M University is taking bids to decide which bus manufacturer will be contracted to provide buses for an in-house shuttle system.

The Texas A&M System Board of Regents decided in July to establish a University-operated shuttle bus system to begin service in the fall of 1982. At that time regents approved \$1.4 million for the purchase of buses and \$1.1 million to build a facility to house the buses.

The current system is operated by Transportation Enterprises Inc. of Austin, whose contract expires at the end of the spring semester. Jim Ferguson, University manager of administrative services for business services, said the contract won't be renewed because of poor service.

"The reason we're getting into the bus service," said Director of Business Services Don Powell, "is we (University officials) feel we can give better service."

On the average, six to 10 of TEI's 30 buses break down every day, Ferguson said, and that is considered poor service.

TEI's Vice President of Operations Doyle Stone would not comment on TEI's service or the University's decision to operate an in-house shuttle system.

"We are expecting from four to six bids (for the buses)," Ferguson said. Two manufacturers have already brought buses to Texas A&M for demonstrations, he said.

The buses will be similar to city transit buses, although they are

not exactly the same as would be seen in Houston, Ferguson said.

The business services office, Ferguson said, plans to purchase 35 buses. Thirty-three of the buses will be large, similar to those used now, and two will be small, he said.

Estimated cost of the larger buses is \$41,000 each, whereas, the smaller buses cost \$25,000 each. The larger buses will hold 44-65 people, Ferguson said, and the smaller buses will hold 18-20. These smaller buses will be used for intra-campus routes, he added, and will be air-conditioned.

One or two additional large buses with air-conditioning will be purchased for special events, such as field trips for students, faculty and former students, Ferguson said. These air-conditioned buses cost \$10,000 to \$11,000 more than the regular shuttle buses.

The bus barn will be located near the Veterinary Medicine center on Agronomy Road.

The majority of the money financing this project, Ferguson

said, is earned by the Business Services office. Business Services is an auxiliary enterprise, he said, which means it is basically self-sustaining without state funds.

"In general terms the cost for the entire system breaks down this way: 75 percent user fees, 18 percent student services fees and 7 percent from book store funds," Ferguson said.

The regents gave business services the authority to spend the money it had already made through user fees and other funds.

If everything goes as planned, Powell said, there will not be an increase in rates. "I think we'll save some money," he said, "but that remains to be seen."

A major university with its own bus service is not common, Ferguson said, adding that he didn't know of any other major school in Texas with an in-house shuttle bus system.

They hope to pick the bus company by Nov. 1 and have the buses in College Station by July 1982, Ferguson said.

Shuttle buses crowded

By PHYLLIS HENDERSON
Battalion Staff

Most students dread the thought of standing at a bus stop for 30 minutes only to watch three buses pass them by, but thousands of students are living that nightmare this semester.

The Business Services Office has received hundreds of student complaints about the shuttle bus system, which is contracted by Transportation Enterprises, Inc.

The complaints have been centered primarily at the "amount of time in between buses," said Jim Ferguson, manager of administrative services. Some students, he said, have complained of waits of up to 45 minutes for a bus.

Richard Kipp, Bryan branch manager of TEI, said scheduling and overcrowding problems are the results of other problems the company has faced.

"The first week (of school)," he said, "we had a lot of trouble with drivers—hiring drivers." Most of the drivers are students, he said, and they want to keep their summer jobs as long as possible. After drivers are hired, he said, it takes two to three days to train them.

"The second week," he said, "we had a barrage of mechanical

problems." Kipp said extra mechanics had been brought from Austin in order to get the buses back into action.

He said crowding became a problem at the peak times of the day: 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., noon and 3 p.m.

TEI has split the Anderson Parkway route in order to alleviate some of the crowding and time lag between buses, Kipp said, but this is the only change the company has made, and the split runs only from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m.

The University requests that at least 30 buses run each day, Ferguson said TEI had run as few as 23 because of the company's problems.

The University meets with TEI each year to determine how many buses will be used on each route. Ferguson said this was decided not only by looking at the number of people on each route, but also by reviewing the amount of time it takes to run each route.

The breakdown between the number of people on each route and the number of buses is:

- Anderson Parkway — 2,350 people/7 buses
- Holleman — 1,250 people/5 buses

- Munson — 1,100 people/3 buses
- Puryear — 1,300 people/4 buses
- Scarlett O'Hara — 1,400 people/4 buses
- 2818 — 1,300 people/5 buses
- Villa Maria — 1,000 people/2 buses

Ferguson said this is the minimum number of buses the University has decided will adequately serve the students. Kipp said the main objective of TEI is to meet the University request, and added that with the other problems under control, he thought that objective would be reached.

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