

State and Local

New intra-campus buses provide students comfort

Drivers question safety of new shuttle buses

By Cheryl Pratt
Reporter

The new intra-campus shuttle buses have features that should make shuttling from class-to-class a more pleasurable experience, but some bus drivers have questions about the buses' safety.

The new buses, called Diamond buses, are made of Fiberglas. Five of the 13 intra-campus buses are Diamonds. They are narrow in the front and get wider toward the back. Some drivers say the structure of the Diamond buses causes blind spots that could be dangerous.

"The Diamond buses are just an accident waiting to happen," said Joe Ashmore, bus driver and engineering technology graduate student.

Another driver, who didn't want his name used, said, "They're all right as long as you always remember to check the blind spots. You can't see anything behind you."

Other bus drivers agree that the blind spots exist, but they believe their benefits outweigh this disadvantage.

"I love the Diamond buses," said Mark Nimocks, bus driver and junior business major. "A lot of drivers don't like them because they have so many blind spots, but they're air-conditioned and they have an AM-FM radio. I like them a lot."

Passengers like these features as well.

"I like them because of the big, cushioned seats and the radio speakers," said Ken Pemberton, a senior journalism major. "It's nice to be able to listen to the radio."

Ashmore said the tinted windows on these buses make it hard for him to see his passengers when he is driving.

"I hate the Diamond buses," Ashmore said. "Not only from the dangerous aspect, but I can't be personable with my passengers. I look in my small rear-view mirror and all I can see are silhouettes. Granted, a bus driver is supposed to drive the bus, but I don't like that atmosphere."

Doug Williams, manager of Bus Operations, said the office eventually wants to replace all the old

miniature shuttle buses with these new Diamond buses.

The Diamond buses are air-conditioned, they ride better, they look better and they are more versatile, he said.

Williams said the Diamond buses cost about \$40,000 each, while the other intra-campus shuttle buses are Carpenter and Thomas buses, which cost about \$32,000.

"If replacing the old buses doesn't save money, I'm certain it will provide better service," Williams said.

All intra-campus shuttle buses are funded by the University Police Department.

Director of University Police Bob Wiatt said, "This year we are giving bus operations about \$380,000 for the operation and maintenance of the intra-campus shuttle buses. We use some of our parking revenues, including parking tickets and parking permits, to fund the intra-campus shuttle buses.

"That alleviates bringing vehicles onto campus. It facilitates moving pedestrians around. So we feel we are justified in assisting shuttle bus operations in its funding."

Clements approves bill raising some highway speeds to 65 mph

AUSTIN (AP) — Taking a swipe at the federal government, Gov. Bill Clements signed the proclamation Wednesday that will raise the speed limit on rural interstate highways to 65 mph beginning Saturday.

"Any federal bureaucrat who thought the 55 mph limit was reasonable never drove a highway mile in Texas," Clements said.

The new speed limit, authorized

earlier by Congress and the state highway commission, takes effect this weekend.

It will apply to about 2,441 miles of the 3,147-mile interstate highway system in Texas. It does not apply to state highways, where the maximum limit remains 55 mph, officials said.

"Texans have wanted the speed limit changed to 65 mph virtually since the day the federal govern-

ment lowered the limit from 70 mph to 55 mph in the early 1970s," the governor said.

Clements also said the lower speed limit, enacted during the Arab oil embargo, had caused difficulties for Texans.

"The reduced limit didn't have much of an impact on smaller states like Rhode Island or Delaware. It had a major impact in Texas."

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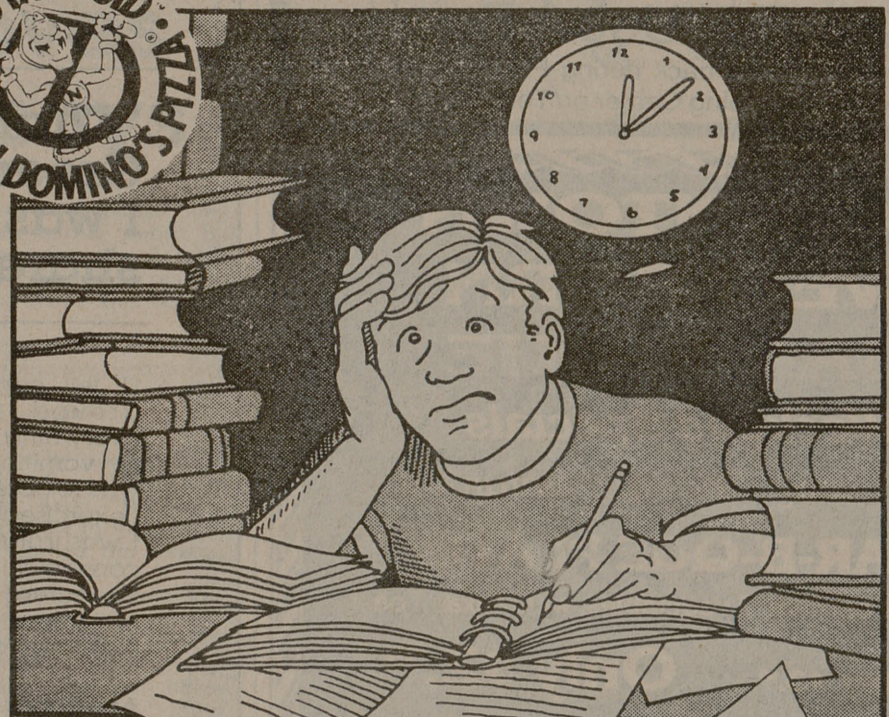
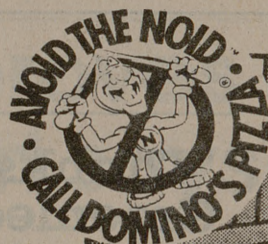
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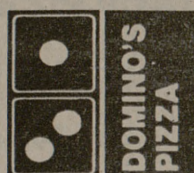


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