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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ANN ARBOR TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

The question to be answered is: Whom does the AATA serve? The Authority claims to serve the people working and living in Ann Arbor. How well does it fulfill this claim? Let's take a look and see.

First of all, a one-way ticket costs 35¢. A one-way ride means a maximum distance of about 3 miles as the crow flies (which is not quite how the AATA buses do it) and a minimum time for that distance of about 45 minutes. Now, for those lucky inhabitants living just within the Ann Arbor city limits, this system might be construed as a savings, considering gasoline and parking costs or shoe leather and walking time. There is one drawback, however, in that the buses run only every half hour and on some lines, only hourly. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the service at the city limits. It occurs everywhere. Pity the commuter who misses the bus.

For those who live or desire to travel within a 1 mile radius of the center of Ann Arbor, the advantage of using the AATA drops off measurably. Remember that this area includes the greatest population of cars and people going to and from work, classes and on lunch-hour excursions. It is here, particularly, that efficient service is necessary to alleviate traffic jams and the resulting noise and air pollution and pure frustration. This region requires 10 minutes to traverse by car and half an hour on foot. What is the price of the bus and how often does it make its rounds? Why, the bus costs 35¢ and comes every half-hour and in some places once every hour.

It is obvious that the answer to our initial questions is that the AATA does not serve the people of Ann Arbor. It has violated the goal of a mass transit service system - that of inexpensive, rapid, convenient transport. If the AATA continues their present policy, they will founder and the cause will be cited as public apathy. City officials will ask the question: does Ann Arbor really want a public transport system? A continuation of the present alternative to private automobiles (which means virtually no alternative at all) will lead to increasing traffic jams, increasing air and noise pollution, escalating parking costs, and continuing numbers of parking structures and pedestrian horrors such as Huron St. There will be more concrete, less foliage, faster and wider roads, and absolutely no space for human beings.

Perhaps Ann Arbor does not "want" a mass transport system - yet. But Ann Arbor needs one - now. For the AATA to be successful, the following reforms are necessary: