

Transportation

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# Free County Bus Passes Raising Some Opposition

By PAUL BEATTY

Sentinel Staff Writer

A free bus pass program for 1,000 employees at county center is raising the hackles of some citizens, according to calls and letters coming into The Sentinel newsroom.

The free passes — an attempt by supervisors to get employees out of their cars, and the cars out of the crowded county parking lot — were approved by the county board in June.

A general fund appropriation of \$26,000 was allocated to pay for the program.

In June, supervisors also increased the county parking lot fee from \$3 a month to \$9 to offset the free pass program, but only 10 days ago rescinded that increase, stating it was discriminatory.

Cost of the passes now will be borne entirely from the general fund supported by local property taxes.

Actual costs of the program are being estimated at much less than the \$26,000, according to County Auditor Art Merrill, who believes the program "will have little effect on the parking problem, but a more cost effective use of money than providing more parking space."

## Sentinel

Friday, Sept. 30, 1977 — Santa Cruz Sentinel—25

If 100 county employees use the passes every day, to get to and from work, it will cost \$1,000 a month.

The county will know how successful the program is initially by November, Merrill said, when the Santa Cruz Metropolitan District sends out its first bill.

The transit district will charge only for actual use at \$10 a month per average daily rider.

The average is established by weekday use, but employees can use the pass anytime of the week, transit director Scott Galloway explained.

He said the pass program is the same as that used by UCSC and Cabrillo College and is open to all private businesses for their employees.

The \$10 month charge is the

same for individuals who want monthly passes.

In funding the free passes, members of the board said their action was to implement the county's goal of cutting down on private auto transportation by 30 percent in the coming years. Merrill doubts if the program will have any significant effect.

"There is a question of whether the passes will be used by employees to get to work in any greater number than now use the bus," Merrill commented.

He said that a car pool program for county employees, which allowed use of a county vehicle for pool members at 15 cents a mile, resulted in only one car being taken out.

The free passes became available this week, and appeared to be going fairly well, according to reports from different departments at the county center.

Merrill suspects, however, there will be more "takers than users" and cost of the program "will be a few thousand" but not use up the \$26,000 allocated.

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### CALM - Coalition

The Community Against Legalized Militarism is not a member of the Progressive Action Coalition, a spokesman for CALM announced today. CALM was listed on a news release from the newly-formed coalition as one of its members.