



Christoph Monecke picks up a customer at UCSC Thursday for his new Santa Cruz Airport Flyer service to San Jose and San Francisco airports. DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

# 'Airport Flyer' gives travelers a lift

By RAMONA TURNER

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SANTA CRUZ — There's a new airport shuttle service in town just in time for the spring and summer travel season.

Kristin and Christoph Monecke launched Santa Cruz Airport Flyer in February, months after the Santa Cruz Airporter folded.

"The Santa Cruz Airporter was around for 40 years," said Kristin Monecke. "When it went out of business, it opened up a window of opportunity for another company to offer shared ridership services to the airport."

In the shuttle business, shared ridership means passengers will be riding with strangers as the shuttle van makes a run from various pick-up points around the county before heading over the hill.

The Airport Flyer joins a dwindling number of shuttle businesses in the county.

The Web site for the California Public Utilities Commission, which issues per-

mits to qualifying shuttle, limousine and charter bus services, reports there are five active shuttle companies, six luxury car services and four adventure and charter oriented firms in the county.

Meanwhile, the list of firms whose permit has been revoked, suspended or expired list stands at six, including the Santa Cruz Airporter.

The Moneckes also operate the Early Bird Airport Shuttle, an eight-year-old

service that offers private party, door-to-door pickups and dropoffs similar to that of a limo service.

They started the Airport Flyer as a way to grow their business and better cater to the various needs Santa Cruz travelers may have, they said.

While there are a number of companies that offer door-to-door services, the Airport Flyer is the only one in the county that offers shared ridership, Monecke said.

So far, the company is getting the thumbs up from travelers.

"This is a great service," said Andrea Sanchez, 18, of Sacramento, who was hitching a ride with the new service Friday near the campus bookstore.

The UC Santa Cruz literature major is on spring break this week and was on her way to San Jose International Airport to hop on a Southwest Airlines. Her plan includes flying down to Los Angeles to visit a friend before heading north to

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## AT A GLANCE

### SANTA CRUZ AIRPORT FLYER

**OFFERS:** Shared rides from Santa Cruz County to San Jose and San Francisco airports

**PICKUP SITES:** Best Western Seacliff Inn in Aptos, University Inn in Santa Cruz and the Hilton Santa Cruz/Scotts Valley

**COST:** \$40 to SJC; \$55 to SFO

**INFORMATION:** 423-5937 or [www.santacruzflyer.com](http://www.santacruzflyer.com)

## SHUTTLE

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Sacramento to see her folks.

Sanchez learned about the Santa Cruz Airport Flyer after seeing a brochure at a campus bus stop.

But at least one fellow airport transportation company questioned the Moneckes' business plan.

Following a scheduled route from one place to the next until finally reaching the airport is a turn-off for passengers, said James Brice, chief executive officer of Surf City Shuttle Inc.

"Scheduled passenger ser-

**'The Santa Cruz Airporter was around for 40 years. When it went out of business, it opened up a window of opportunity for another company.'**

KRISTIN MONECKE, owner

vice is why the Santa Cruz Airporter went out of business," he said.

For a few dollars more, he said travelers could be picked up at their door and dropped off at the airport terminal.

Though he has his reservations, Brice said there is plenty of business to go around now that there are fewer companies to compete with.

"Our market share is up about 30 percent," he said

while mentioning that shuttle companies continue to disappear from the radar. "I don't know if I'm doing better because I'm better than the competition or because the competition pool is getting smaller," Brice said he and his two business partners get 50-60 calls weekly for rides to the airport, while the Moneckes and their seven drivers report 20 to 25 shuttle requests daily.

The Santa Cruz Airport Flyer's shuttle vans make regular stops at the Best Western Seacliff Inn in Aptos, the University Inn in Santa Cruz and the Hilton Santa Cruz/Scotts Valley before embarking over Highway 17 to the airports in San Jose and San Francisco. It makes nine roundtrips a day.

Airport-bound residents can expect to pay \$40 per person for a ride to San Jose and \$55 to San Francisco International airports, Monecke said.

By comparison, the Early Bird Airport Shuttle charges \$75 for up to three passengers to San Jose and \$115 for the same number of people to San Francisco, she said.