

Transportation 1980-84

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# Drivers Get A Boost At Transit Meeting

The door swung a little wider this morning to let Metropolitan Transit District bus drivers have more say in the operation of the local bus system.

Transit directors agreed the drivers union should play a principal part in consulting work and changes in the district to improve the safety of buses and relations between the work force and management.

Director Michael Rotkin went as far as to say that representatives of the drivers and maintenance force should be brought in at the policy formulation level to a much greater degree than has been previously proposed.

He said that among other things, it would give the work force a better grasp of the problems and let them "know of the limited powers of the board."

Forcing the issue was a recent Grand Jury report based on complaints by bus drivers over the exhaust fumes in the smaller buses and the large Grumman buses.

Drivers say the fumes on some occasions have made them ill and on a few occasions have nearly overcome the drivers.

They also say that when complaints are made, the district management fails to respond.

Their complaints were repeated in the recent Grand Jury report and the jury

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recommended that better systems of management-employee relations be set up. Also, the jury recommended that buses be brought up to safety standards.

A number of transit directors said they were aware that both the small buses that travel the mountain routes and the large buses have problems. It was brought out that the larger buses were mandated by federal order and that the smaller type buses (Wayne models) were the only small buses available at the time of purchase.

The board agreed that a consulting firm be hired to look at the mechanical problems, bus scheduling that drivers say is too tight, and the relationship of management and workers.

Union spokesmen said they wanted a consulting firm with technical expertise on health and safety and indicated they were not supportive of the Arthur B. Little firm recommended by District Manager Scott Galloway.

Director Gary Patton said that while there was basis to the complaints, the

Santa Cruz city-county system was one of the best in the nation and had been built on a disproportionately small budget for the management force.

Transit board chairman Bob Garcia took a quiet shot at the Grand Jury, saying

that it had never contacted him or the full board (it talked to two board members, according to grand juror Hal Levin) and that many of the jury's concerns were already being worked on by the transit board.