

Cheers, again, for the People Movers

Let's take a minute to cheer, once again, for the People Mover bus system in Anchorage.

Our town's young but growing mass transit system seems to reach a milestone nearly every month. There's so much good news about the system that it could get tiresome to pause for a hurrah every time one's called for.

Final tabulations for 1979 show the number of riders up an impressive 41 percent over 1978 — a total of 2,329,575 for last year, up from 1,645,561 the year before. On the average, about 10,000 people queue up daily for seats on the People Mover, a number bus system planners estimate keeps 3,600 cars off the highway each day.

The new decade seems to be following that pattern. January, 1980 was the busiest month ever for the system, with 231,070 people riding the bus.

Those figures were accomplished with a fleet of just 37 buses — far fewer than the system really needs. At peak hours, available coaches are filled to overflowing and there aren't any back-up buses to help ease the strain. Ten new units have been on order through a federally funded program for several months, but it may be 1981 before they are delivered.

In the meantime, the bus system needs more buses. Officials are searching for five more to help bridge the gap until the other 10 arrive, and they should be given the tools to make that purchase. It would be a shame if the system began to lose its impressive gains simply because it couldn't keep pace with demand.

Anchorage needs the People Movers. We should do whatever it takes to help the system grow and prosper and help relieve our crowded streets — and keep giving us reason to cheer.