

# suzan nightingale

## *The parking spot black market*



If you think finding a parking place downtown is fun now, just wait until the new Federal Building opens next year. Expected to house 2,300 employees, the multi-million dollar structure has . . . 500 parking spaces, 200 of them already reserved.

Gentlemen, start your engines. It's going to look like the great land rush of the 1800's. And, economics being what they are, if it's possible to blackmarket parking spaces, someone will find a way to do it.

**BUT THERE'S** another kind of economics, too. The balance of time and money, the hassle factor. And parking in Anchorage definitely has a hassle factor.

And that's where the People Mover comes in. Right now, the People Mover system is kind of like a secret society to a lot of people. They know it's there, but they don't know what goes on inside. To them, buses represent a vague sense of delay, inconvenience and confusion.

And although the transit division has tried to make People Mover information available to the general public, there has never been a carefully located clearing house for questions about the system. Nor has there been a centrally-located accommodation center that gave riders a warm inviting place to wait for the bus after they'd finished their day downtown.

**SUCH A PLACE** is planned for the corner of Sixth and G. Funded by \$230,000 in federal grant funds, the proposed rider accommodation center would feature a warm place to wait for the bus and a fulltime employee to disseminate information about the system.

It's just the kind of center that could give the ever-growing system some solid help by making information accessible and accommodations inviting.

Unfortunately some people are opposing the accommodation center because it would replace 39 existing parking spaces on the Sixth and G lot. They maintain that the parking places are needed more than the accommodation center, which they predict will serve little purpose other than providing a haven for drunks.

Some individuals have suggested the bus headquarters should be at the Federal Building if that's where the problem is going to be.

Sad to say, the 'ole Federal Building isn't the only place where the problem exists, it's the entire central business district. The problem is just magnified at the Federal Building.

What these people refuse to acknowledge is that parking is never going to be the solution to the woes of the central business district. The People Mover could be.

**BUT IT'S NOT** going to happen automatically. People won't jump out of their cars and into a bus unless it's very easy and very inviting for them to do so.

A passenger accommodation center downtown could be the first big step in that direction.