

UNL buses called overcrowded

By Patti Gallagher

The white line is the limit for the bus lines running between City and East campuses.

It is legal to fill the buses with passengers up to a white line behind the bus driver, but some students riding the buses have said overcrowding has caused more than an inconvenience.

According to UNL freshman Karen Watson, "people have gotten closed in the doors," riders have been forced to stand in stairwells when seats and aisle space was full and the view of the driver has been obstructed frequently by standing passengers.

Watson said the 12:30 p.m. bus to East Campus is especially crowded.

Representatives of the Lincoln Transportation System, which rents the campus buses to the UNL Auto Pool, said although capacity laws do not limit the number of students on the buses, the situation described by Watson would be illegal.

Jerry Olsen, general manager for LTS, specifically said the occupation of stairwells and obstruction of drivers' vision are not allowed.

Olsen said, however, that it is a LTS policy for drivers to inform their superiors if the operating conditions of their buses are unsafe. So far, he said, LTS has not received such a notice.

THE PRIMARY CONCERN of LTS, Olsen said, is the safe operation of buses.

The primary concern of the auto pool, however, is getting students to classes on time, according to Joe Pospichal, director of support services for the auto pool.

Pospichal said the buses may be filled legitimately up to the white line in the aisle directly behind the driver. He said that no law for a capacity number is imposed on the buses.

The auto pool rents three buses from LTS at \$14.00 per hour per day. The buses travel between City and East Campus approximately 11 times daily, according to Alicia Law, assistant manager of auto pool. The first run of the day is at 7 a.m.; the last run ends at 6:05 p.m. daily, she said.

The buses can hold 60 people, seated two per regular seat, Watson said.

The bus drivers submit weekly "load reports" to LTS that approximate the number of riders each day.

THE LOAD REPORTS, which Pospichal said are 80-85 percent accurate, have shown that the average heavy load has been 80 persons. The peak-load hit 125, within the last five to six years, he said.

Both bus riders and officials agreed that the problem of crowding is only apparent during the after-lunch routes, leaving city campus around 12:30 p.m.

Pospichal said the crowded buses have been more "an inconvenience" than a danger, and that the busline's safety record has been good.

However, Watson said, "I don't see how they can be called safe."

She said that sudden stops land people in each others' laps, and said if a bus were to crash, "the people standing up would probably go through the windows."

Watson said that frequently three rows of students have been forced to stand in the aisles, and a student riding the bus this fall counted 125 occupants.

Another student bus rider, Linda Brooks, termed the busline, especially the 12:35 p.m. route to East Campus, "hazardous," but said she'd rather take the packed bus than be late for class.

Brooks said the drivers also put this consideration first, and will stop for everyone no matter how "sardine pack-

ed" the bus may be.

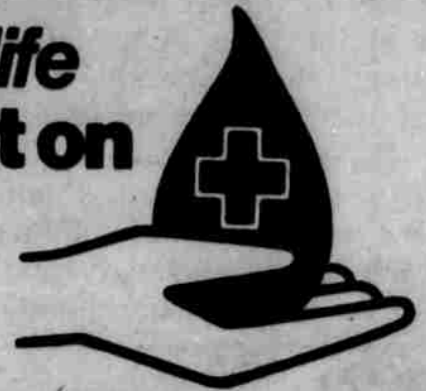
Pospichal said the auto pool has not received any complaints about crowding of the buses this semester, and said his employees frequently ride the buses themselves to analyze the situation.

If the employees spot a serious problem, the solution would be to rent another bus from LTS, Pospichal said.

There are, however, "very few dollars available" for another bus, he added.

Pospichal encouraged students with gripes about bus space to contact the auto pool.

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