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Sideview mirrors

Cars abound at the Greater St. Louis International Auto Show. If attendance at the show is any indication, 1984 will be a banner year for the auto industry. In the first two days of the show, 35,000 people viewed the latest cars and vans. Officials expect even larger crowds over the weekend. (UPI photo)

New cut-rate bus company to begin service next week

by Peter Rubey

Western Trails Transportation Co., a new bus service which operated during the Greyhound bus drivers' strike, will begin regular cut-rate weekly service next Friday, its campus representative said yesterday.

"There is a clear demand for low-cost transportation to the Chicago-area," said Dennis Toeppen, sophomore in LAS. "We first tried the cut-rate with six buses at Thanksgiving and it worked really well."

Western Trails, based in Lombard, will offer service to Oakbrook Mall, Woodfield Mall, and the Cumberland CTA station beginning Friday. Round-trips to all three destinations cost \$26, while a one-way trip costs \$14.50. The buses depart on Friday and arrive on Sunday at the Illinois Street Residence Hall in Urbana and the Illini Orange Snack Bar in Champaign.

"We are using various non-union buses, which are cheaper but comparable to Greyhound equipment," Toeppen said.

The service's price is \$2.90 less for a one-way trip and \$7.10 less for a round-trip than the Illini Union Travel Center's price for the Cumberland CTA station trip, the only trip both services have in common. The center offers nine routes including Markham, Skokie, Northbrook, Forest Park, Northlake, Elk Grove, Downtown Chicago and 95th Street and the Dan Ryan. Ticket prices for both one-way and round-trip travel vary according to the trip's distance.

But, the director of the travel center, Robert Mindrum, expressed concern over whether students will take factors other than price into consideration when deciding where to buy a bus ticket for the Chicago area.

"We are aware that in a free enterprise system, competition is often healthy, but bus riders should be educated consumers," Mindrum said. "While Greyhound fares may at this time be higher than those of competitors, there are some distinct advantages to riding Greyhound."

Mindrum said the travel center

sells an unlimited number of one-way and round-trip tickets to all of its destinations and guarantees that its buses will run regardless of the number of tickets sold.

"In their ad, Western Trails says that their fare and schedule are subject to change without notice, and that only a limited number of one-way seats are available each weekend," Mindrum said.

Mindrum also questioned the dependability of small charter operators. He said that such operators run the risk of mechanical failure because they often purchase buses which Greyhound sells after a specified number of miles.

But, Toeppen said, Western Trails' buses, which are "similar to Greyhound equipment," have been rebuilt.

"The MC 7 and GM 4905 buses which we use were made between 1970 and 1973, and are in very good running condition," he said. "Also, we are planning to add a brand new Golden Eagle bus in March which is worth \$165,000. It is far nicer than anything Greyhound is using today."

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ean the purchases but a lag in foreign buys of U.S. goods.

"It is definitely going to be a disastrous year for U.S. trade because the dollar is so strong," said David Ernst, an economist with Evans Economics, a Washington consulting firm.

Ernst said the weak trade picture was putting a drag on the overall U.S. economic recovery. He said the combination of weak exports and the flood of imports had cost at least 1.2 million American jobs. He said overall economic growth would have been 4.5 percent for 1983, instead of the actual 3.3 percent, without the precipitous decline in the trade balance.

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