

AATA to review bus ads - Board will address concerns over wrap-around designs

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During a recent bus trip in Ann Arbor, Jim Rees noticed he couldn't read house numbers clearly through a shrink-wrapped advertisement on the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority bus.

Rees didn't miss his stop because he's familiar with the neighborhood, but he said he fears other people could.

"You need to be aware of your surroundings," Rees said. "It's a safety issue."

Mary Stasiak, **AATA** manager of community relations, said the authority has received three complaints about wrap-around ads on the buses over the past three years. She learned of Rees' concerns last week and said an **AATA** board committee plans to evaluate the three-year old program this month.

"Everybody has been concerned about the impact on the community and the riders," Stasiak said. "We take it very seriously."

Some riders said they don't mind the ads if the revenue keeps the service going and affordable.

"It's advertisement for businesses," said Becky Cupp, as she waited for a bus in Ypsilanti. "I like the bus system, and advertisement does not bother me if it keeps the fare cheap."

AATA board Chairman David Nacht said ad sales bring much-needed revenue to prevent fare increases and avoid service cuts. "It was a difficult decision," he said.

Nacht said the board will review the concerns and determine their validity. "If our customers are unhappy with something,

we want to look at it," he said.

The authority began selling ads on its buses in 2005 to offset budget shortfalls and cuts in state funding, Stasiak said. Currently, 37 of the 72 **AATA** buses carry ads, and nine buses feature wrap-around ads, she said.

The authority generated more than \$77,000 in **advertising** revenue between July 2006 and July 2007, with that amount expected to increase next year, Stasiak said.

The cost of **advertising** varies between \$3,500 and \$5,000 a month, depending on the number of months and the size of the bus, she said.

Some people have expressed concerns about the wrap-around ads being too dark to see through at night, especially ads that are dark red and dark blue, Stasiak said. The ads are stickers that peel off easily, and the company that places the ads on the buses is currently exploring thinner stickers, she said.

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