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For the first time in the United States, bus riders in the San Francisco Bay Area, in 1970, will be riding buses powered by steam engines.

Under a demonstration project announced jointly today by Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe and John Francis Foran, Chairman of the Assembly Transportation Committee of the California Legislature, four steam engines -- more properly known as external combustion engines -- will be installed in buses operated by the San Francisco Municipal Railroad (MUNI) and the AC Transit Company in Oakland.

Although the Stanley Steamer is now a museum piece, new technology and new methods of production are now at a point where it appears that the steam engine may, in fact, live up to the potential identified for it years ago. This, coupled with the dangers of pollution from the internal combustion engine, has rekindled interest in the steam engine and in other vapor cycle engines for cars, buses, and trucks. Congress focused attention on external combustion technology in hearings held last May before the Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution of the U. S. Senate. These hearings pointed up the attractive features of the external combustion engine -- its low pollution output, its operating efficiency and trouble-free maintenance. Federal concern about the problems of air pollution was underscored last week when Robert H. Finch, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare announced new Federal guidelines for controlling air pollution.

In making today's announcement, Secretary Volpe said: "This project emphasizes the Department of Transportation's desire to coordinate Federal efforts with those of leaders in other public sectors and with private business in the search for solutions to the problems created by transportation's impact on the environment. It represents a significant first step toward reducing air pollution from public transportation."

Under the grant, an engine will be selected from among the many which are currently being developed. These engines will be fully tested for safety, operating efficiency, and ease of maintenance, after which they will be put into service on a demonstration basis. This two-year project will be the first in which Federal support is provided on a demonstration basis for the development of external combustion technology. A consulting firm hired by the State of California will monitor the demonstration project, collecting information on cost of operation, pollution output, maintenance problems, power, noise, performance, and public reaction.

The demonstration project is supported under DOT's program of research, development, and demonstrations of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration which is aimed at improving mass transportation in all cities across the nation through the application of new technology. The total cost of the program for three years is estimated at \$610,000 of which the Federal share will be \$450,000. The initial Federal grant is for \$244,250 to aid in the purchase, installation and testing of the engine. The State of California, AC Transit and San Francisco MUNI will contribute \$160,000 in services.

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