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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe announced today a \$422,295 Federal grant to Kent State University at Kent, Ohio.

The grant will support an experimental project designed to improve the scheduling, public information service and maintenance of bus transit systems.

"Increasing costs and decreasing profit margins preclude many bus system operators from hiring additional workers to improve service," Secretary Volpe said.

"The use of electronic communication systems such as those being developed at Kent State University may be the means of improving substantially the service of bus transit systems to make them more competitive modes of travel."

One objective of the project is to make obsolete the old joke -- "buses always travel in pairs."

Using communication devices developed in prior research at Kent State, techniques will be tested of communicating to drivers the time lapse since the passage of a previous bus thus permitting increased or decreased speed to maintain desired intervals between buses.

Locations of buses enroute will be communicated by the same devices to a central dispatcher and desired alterations in schedules will be made and information collected for relay to bus system patrons.

A portion of the experiment will test the concept of dial-a-bus service.

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A demonstration bus service will be set up on campus. Computed demands of the bus users will allow the dispatcher to electronically plot a bus route to serve all users. The route will be communicated to the driver by his inserting a card in a roadside device.

Other phases of the experiment will concentrate upon techniques of automatic warning devices to warn of impending mechanical trouble and the processing of operating data by electronic means.

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