

ASUO should push escort plan ahead

Requests for nightly escorts surged by about 140 percent last term, but the University has yet to see the ASUO's proposed shuttle van service. The increase in escort requests should prod the student administration to move the plan from the drawing board to the streets.

Student requests to the Office of Public Safety, which operates its own service in addition to the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity's walking escort service, jumped from an average of 35 per night to 85. To try to accommodate the added demand, the office recently replaced its door-to-door service with a shuttle that makes hourly rounds. The system is less convenient for students, but the office appears to be making the best of a bad situation.

The ASUO-sponsored shuttle service has been the crown of the current administration's proposed fight to stop violence against women since Lynn Pinckney and John Dreeszen campaigned for their respective offices of ASUO president and vice president last April. The proposed system was spotlighted in October when the project's committee announced plans to implement a women-only system, which would bar men from using or participating in the service.

The plan's committee, composed of members from the ASUO administration, the Greek system, the Rape Crisis Network and the Women's Referral and Resource Service, is divided into two subcommittees. ASUO University Affairs Coordinator Ray Veillet heads the subcommittee responsible for obtaining program funding. ASUO State Affairs Coordinator Debra Kester chairs the subcommittee responsible for mapping out the program itself.

Initiating an escort service is not easy. The committee must obtain vehicles and liability insurance. It must determine the route, secure funding, determine administrative policies and obtain security clearances for proposed drivers from the Public Safety Office.

But even though the program's committee appears to be sincere about providing the service, it has not pursued implementation vigorously. In the seven months since Pinckney and Dreeszen announced they would instigate the plan, the project's committee has failed to raise a single penny. It does not know where vans will be obtained. It has not settled on a final route. And those at the forefront of the program's planning, Kester and Veillet, seem confused about program details.

Kester blames the plan's stalled introduction on a lack of funds. She said if the committee had the funds in hand, the program would be off the ground within two weeks. As it is, the program will begin operation by the end of this term, she said.

Veillet said the committee won't request funds until a comprehensive package can be presented. He does not know where funds will be obtained. He set the operation date at somewhere between the end of this term and the middle of spring term.

It is interesting to note that it took Lambda Chi Alpha only one week to implement its service following the final decision to provide it. A walking escort service requires less planning than a shuttle service, but the exceptionally short time span demonstrates what determination can accomplish.

The ASUO shuttle van service would be a welcome addition to the University. Campus Security has offered to discontinue its service and focus on other areas of operation if the ASUO's shuttle service can adequately meet demand. The ASUO should step up efforts to deliver the system it promised.



Commentary

Germany's decaying forests mirror future for U.S. forests

Every weekend, an average of 50,000 people stroll through the forest outside of Stuttgart, West Germany. As they walk, they are confronted with yard-high white crosses painted on dead and dying trees.

The cause of this forest's ailment, German scientists believe, is air pollution deposited directly on the trees by fog, mist, rain or dry particles, or absorbed through the soil — or a combination of these factors. Nationwide, the effect of this pollution, coupled with insect infestation and other natural forces to which the ailment trees are doubly vulnerable, is ominous.

•By November, 1984, 50 percent of Germany's forests showed some degree of stress and illness, ranging from premature leaf loss to standing dead;

•In the Black Forest of the Southeast, where the first signs of tree damage were seen in 1970, the proportion of "nearly dead" trees went from 11 to 25 percent in two years; and,

•In the Fichtelgebirge Forest, a remote area stretching over the border of Czechoslovakia and East and West Germany, the damage level has reached 79

percent.

Last November, the German Marshall Fund of the United States organized a tour of Germany's forests so that U.S. forest company executives, Congressional aides and environmentalists could see firsthand what is happening in the Federal Republic. The tour participants met scientists, foresters, private citizens and government officials involved in the increasingly frantic race to diagnose the cause of Germany's dying forests and recommend solutions before time runs out.

What are the implications for the United States? The Director of the German government's Air Pollution Research Program believes that forest stress "is not only a Germany problem any more." Citing forest problems in New England, the Rocky Mountains, Central Europe and southern Sweden, he contends that "forest stress is a problem of the Northern Hemisphere." Indeed, high-elevation forests in the North and Southeast of the United States are decreasing in vitality, and in some instances, dying.

Yet, it has been known for over a century that air pollution causes vegetative damage. An English scientist noted this in 1852, and decades later the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) corroborated it with research showing crop damage from air pollution.

The current scientific debate, therefore, centers on which pollutant or pollutants contribute to forest stress. Dr. Peter Schuett, professor of forest botany at the University of Munich, believes that "it is difficult to look for the answer in a single (air pollution) component." The question, then, is first, which of the many air pollutants are the principal contributors to forest death, and second, do these pollutants act

alone or in combination with one another?

In an effort to find the elusive answers, Congressman Jim Weaver, D-Ore., held hearings on July 17 on the effects of air pollution on forest ecosystems. Representatives from the EPA, the U.S. forest industry and the scientific and environmental communities testified on both the issue at hand and Weaver's bill, H.R. 2963 — authorizing a 10-year research program within the U.S. Forest Service.

Meanwhile, the U.S. forest industry is investing \$1.3 million this year into researching the effects of air pollution on forest health. As the National Forest Products Association and the American Paper Institute said at Congressman Weaver's hearing, "...our business, like no one else's, depends on maintaining the health of America's forests." But it will be what scientists find and Congress does that will in large part determine the health of U.S. forests.

However, the time for finding the answers to our questions is now. West Germany's experience has proven this with the increase from eight percent of its forests damaged in 1982, to 34 percent in 1983, to 50 percent damaged in 1984.

Indeed, as he stood among his sick trees last winter, a forester in West Germany's Black Forest captured the sense of urgency that we may soon hear in our country: "We can research as much as we want, but the forest will die if nothing is done."

By Beth Millemann

Beth Millemann is an environmentalist who recently toured German forests as part of a German Marshall Fund project.

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