



Lead Industries Association, Inc.

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October 25, 1973

SUBJECT: LANSING, MICHIGAN ELECTRIC
BUS INSTALLATION

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION, INC.:

Attached is a report from Connel Baker on the Lansing, Michigan bus project, referred to recently on two occasions by the New York Times. It might be assumed from this report that the whole project was ill-advised but the electric bus program seems to be taking the brunt of the blame.

However, we understand that major steps are being taken to get the situation in proper perspective. Batttronic Corporation reports a special program now being implemented to assist the City of Lansing with a maintenance and educational project for operating personnel.

We will continue to monitor this situation.

Sincerely,

Jerome F. Smith
Secretary & General ManagerJFS:lm
Enclosure



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August 1, 1973

TO: F. E. Robinson

FROM: C. A. Baker, Jr.

The New York Times story on Lansing buses is distorted and does not present the facts as I know them.

I was there on July 9 and observed the operation as well as interviewed a driver.

Here are the facts as I know them:

1. The downtown revitalization project is less than one-third complete. The portion that is complete does not front any stores -- just office buildings and a large open area demolished for slum clearance. The six buses that were purchased for a completed project obviously are not needed if the project is not complete, thus a reduction in schedule or total shutdown.
2. The downtown streets that were to be included in the mall layout are still open to autos and the city has converted these streets into paid parking lots (the electric buses were originally intended to cover this area exclusively for shopping). Cars are permitted to enter, a little cubicle at each intersection houses a fee collector, and the parking is straight into the curb. The bus drivers have to run this gauntlet -- very narrow openings -- but no one needs to ride the bus when the cars are permitted to park directly in front of the stores. In other words, the close-in parking system obviates the bus transit system.
3. There is a rumor that the whole project, a Model Cities Program, is bogged down in political entanglement. It seems inconceivable that a struggling new technology be whipped for this reason.

CONNEL A. BAKER, JR.

CAB:ip
Attachment

Lansing Bus Fleet, Battery-Powered, Sidelined for Repair

Special to The New York Times

LANSING, Mich., Sept. 29

The nation's first fleet of battery-powered buses have been taken out of service in this city until extensive repairs and safety improvements are made.

Clare Loudenslager, the general executive director of the Capital Area Transportation Authority, which operates the six buses, said he had a three-page list of repairs and defects that he wanted corrected by the manufacturer, the Bechtel Truck Company of Boyertown, Pa.

Mechanics from the company will work on the buses, Bechtel's president Harry Yoder, said. However, he denied Mr. Loudenslager's assertion that there are safety defects in the buses. He said repairs were needed because of improper use and maintenance of the buses.

Two months ago the transportation authority board ordered four of the six buses garaged because of mechanical problems and lack of riders. Fewer than 100 passengers a week were paying the dime fare to ride the 20-passenger buses when the last two were taken out of service earlier this month.

The possibility that the buses may never return to the streets of the Michigan capital was raised by Mr. Loudenslager, a former Diamond Ren Truck Company executive. He said that had he been in charge of the transportation authority when the buses were acquired last year he would never have bought them.

Instead, Mr. Loudenslager said, he would have bought small diesel-powered rigs because he considers them more reliable and they can be used on long cross-town routes.

Lansing is the first of half a dozen American cities that are studying the use of or have ordered battery-powered buses as a quiet, emission-free alternative to conventional diesel buses for short-trip inner city transportation.