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SEP 1 1981

Travel Mess Doesn't Stop Americans

A MERICANS nearly always manage to get to places they need to go and usually to wherever they just want to go as well.

This is being accomplished despite difficulties in what has been called "The Great American Transportation Mess." Travel conditions haven't gotten so bad that a return of horse-drawn vehicles is in sight or people have started walking to work.

Statistics show that travel is down but you don't get that idea on 55 mph highways, at airports, bus stations or train depots.

Automobile prices have doubled, cost of auto repairs has tripled and gasoline prices have quadrupled in the last decade. Motorists just switched to smaller cars for better gas mileage, paid the prices demanded and kept on rolling.

Highway funds are inadequate to keep our vast system of streets and highways repaired, but that doesn't stop the traffic.

People are still getting around in planes, too, in spite of the air traffic controllers strike. Enough controllers remained on the job to keep the

system functioning. The union insists flying isn't safe without them but so far accidents are fewer than before.

Flights are spread farther apart and there is less congestion in the air lanes. Fewer flights mean that airlines may have taken some overworked or obsolete planes out of service.

You can't go much of any place on Amtrak, but crowds of people are trying to get on the trains anyway. Although the semi-nationalized rail system isn't making expenses, officials claim that passenger miles have risen 50 percent and that they could fill another 300 rail cars daily with passengers if they had them.

Bus travel appears to be a fast-moving business to motorists who watch them whiz by on the highways. Buses might not be regarded as luxury transportation but they move millions daily. It may be easier to go across country by bus than it is to get across town, but without buses, a lot of people couldn't go anywhere.

Americans spend almost as much

on transportation as they spend on food. The average proportion of disposable income spent for food is around 16 percent. Fifteen cents of every dollar of personal spending goes for transportation.

Determination to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to reach chosen destinations has been a part of American history from the time some 100 Pilgrims crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a boat many might consider too small for comfortable sailing on a lake.

Later pioneers traveled by stage coaches, covered wagons and Model T Fords to reach every nook and corner of the nation. We even sent men to the moon because somebody wanted to go there.

There has been talk for decades about how rapid and efficient transportation has made the world seem smaller. Strong demand for world travel, world trade, communications and tourism means that somehow we will solve our transportation problems. If present modes of travel won't work, somebody will find a better way.