

Gabi Friedman

Minute of History

Presented at Summit Common Council Meeting of November 16, 2015

In 1974, Former Mayor Bennet proposed to set up a minibus service around the City of Summit as a form of energy conservation. The council, on the mayor's request, established a committee, in which plans for fare, route, purchase of minibuses, and a referendum were put forth. Citizens of Summit voted 4 to 1 in favor of the minibus, which was then established in November of the following year.

Three Mercedes-Benz busses travelled three diverging routes throughout the town. The new form of transportation method got rave reviews from those who rode, but unfortunately, their numbers were few. Those who needed the service the most, the town's seniors, felt the rates were too high. School children only rode in bad weather. And commuters didn't ride at all. Annual deficits quickly reached upwards of \$50,000.

The issue of the minibus became contentious. Fiscal conservatives saw the minibus as unsustainable, while others suggested that self-sustainability was not necessarily a goal of this municipal service. A second referendum showed a small majority supported the minibus, even in the face of definite long-term deficits. But reduction in state aid and rises in other budgetary costs brought a quick death. Service was terminated on January 1, 1979, only five years after it had begun.