



THE JITNEY—THEN WHAT?

A Ready-Made Opportunity for a Philadelphia Industry

The jitney is abroad in the land.

It is rife in the West and is sweeping eastward with the rapidity which always follows when something springs into being that fills a long-felt want.

Already it has made its appearance in this city.

And its coming has a portent for one of the great industries of Philadelphia.

"Jitney" originally was slang for a five-cent piece.

On a day not very many weeks ago, a man appeared in the streets of a far Western city with an automobile and a sign on it, announcing that he would take people wherever they wanted to go within the business district for five cents—a jitney. He soon filled his car, and by the end of the day, his pockets. His success was so immediate and so public that it is small wonder that within a few days there were in that city a dozen jitney chauffeurs. By the strange telepathy of success, the idea leaped to other cities. In four weeks San Francisco had 1500 jitneys—chiefly second-hand automobiles. Los Angeles has 1000, Seattle, Portland, Salt Lake City, Kansas City, St. Louis, Fort Worth, Chicago and many other cities have them by scores and hundreds. In half a dozen Eastern cities they are beginning to appear.

The gasoline and tire companies are supporting the idea, city governments are drafting new traffic regulations, franchises and licenses—and the traction interests are seriously considering how they can best meet the situation.

The jitney is here—the inevitable result of the combination of two things—the growing discomfort of traveling in crowded street cars, and the drop in the cost of the automobile.

The jitney as a five-cent public utility is here to stay. Whether it will stay in its present form is a question. At present, any automobile may be a jitney. Some are just touring cars, some have special round bodies and look like great wash-tubs. Some are converted trucks, and *some are the familiar auto bus.*

Herein lies the opportunity for Philadelphia.

The jitney should logically develop to the point where it is carrying not merely five or seven passengers, but as many as can be carried. This means the automobile bus.

A representative of one of the largest automobile factories in the country has already made the prediction that "the jitney will soon disappear

to be replaced by an 'automobile express'—cars built especially for city-passenger traffic, with a capacity of ten or a dozen persons each and operating regular routes, with branch lines and transfer-stations." He says that several manufacturers are already at work on this idea, as a result of the advent of the jitney bus.

The present agitation seems to point to a greater use of automobile bus lines in cities and towns of all sizes.

The normal function of such lines would be not directly to compete with the street cars, except at points of great congestion. They would rather operate over streets and through districts not now served by transportation, carrying people to the connecting points of the car lines and opening up new territories.

It is not inconceivable that the traction interests will in the end find the motor bus a valuable factor in solving the problems, both of congestion and of tapping districts which for reasons of expense, street regulations or otherwise, cannot be reached by tracks.

Philadelphia is a center for the manufacture of 'automobile buses. In many American cities there are today operating bus lines equipped by Philadelphia makers, many of them doing the very work outlined above.

Detroit seized and developed the automobile industry.

Why should not Philadelphia seize and develop the jitney bus industry?

Why should not a corporation which is prepared to manufacture and deliver jitney buses enter at once into a powerful campaign of national advertising, based on these ideas:

1. To crystallize and direct the movement NOW, and bring it into general public favor.
2. To point out that properly handled, the jitney need not be antagonistic to the interests and investment of existing traction lines, but rather may be made to supplement and feed them—reducing critical congestion and developing profitable business for them.
3. To show how the jitney may be introduced anywhere by an individual or a small group of men, without a great outlay of capital, not only in a large city, but in any small city or large town.
4. To point out the greater profits to be earned by the operation of buses as against smaller automobiles.
5. To sell Philadelphia-made buses, taking advantage of the prestige already established for them.

Detroit, while other cities looked askance, made the automobile industry its own and made fortunes by it.

Shall not Philadelphia—building on a groundwork already established—make of the jitney bus a great Philadelphia industry?

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