

signals end to long ride

By Cathy Frye
Odessa American

TERLINGUA — School bus driver Melody Clarke might be able to sleep in next year.

About 120 miles would be trimmed from her rambling route if plans for a high school in Terlingua fall into place.

"That sounds like an awful lot," she mused. "I wouldn't have to get up quite so early in the morning. I'd have some real time at home."

Clarke rises at 4 a.m. each weekday to pick up Big Bend-area students who attend high school classes in Alpine, which is 80 miles away. By the time Clarke gets home at 7 p.m. each evening, she's logged at least 200 miles.

But these lengthy rides may end with the 1995-96 school year.

Just last week, trustees for the Terlingua and San Vincente districts approved a partnership that will allow them to build a high school. Land adjacent to the elementary school in Terlingua already has been purchased.

The Big Bend Education Corporation, created to find funding for the project, now is raising money for the construction of a "bare-bones school," said engineer Doug Smith.

Classes in this sparsely populated part of West Texas currently stop at the eighth grade, forcing students from Terlingua, Lajitas, Big Bend National Park and other nearby towns to commute to Alpine each day.

Pick-up is at 5:30 a.m. in Terlingua. That means those who live in other settlements must get up even earlier to make the bus. When classes end, students immediately head home. Even so, they still don't arrive in Terlingua until 5:30 p.m., said Kathy Killingsworth, principal



The American: Debra Simpson

of the Terlingua Common School District.

Ultimately, the interminable ride proves to be too much for some students, Killingsworth added.

"So many of them drop out. And the ones that hang in there, they can't be involved in any sports or extracurricular activities because they board the bus and they're out of there.

"That's all they do during the week — ride the bus and go to school."

The school districts will submit a

See RIDE on Page 2A

Fax Note	7671	Date	3/28/95	# of pages	5
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