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A Matchbox vehicle modeled after a city of Everett Transit bus has earned mixed reviews from toy car aficionados.

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WE TOOK THE NEW MATCHBOX EVERETT BUS TO THE STREETS

By **ANDY RATHBUN**
Herald Writer

We knew this much: The wheels on the bus went round and round. Outside that, we at Good Life had trouble forming an opinion about Matchbox's new vehicle, patterned after an Everett Transit bus, mainly because we couldn't find one to play with.

The bus hit the market during the 2008 holiday season as part of Matchbox's City Action series. However, the toy was not in stock at the Everett Target, Wal-Mart or Toys "R" Us in early February, when we went shopping.

Mattel doesn't sell Matchbox vehicles directly to customers or disclose product shipment details. Our best bet seemed to be eBay. Several of the buses were priced on the auction Web site at \$1, the same as the retail value.

But shipping and handling was a ghastly \$4. We said, "Forget that!" made some calls to Everett Transit, and finagled a toy from the department's exclusive stock.

It looked neat.

We wondered about the critical reaction, though, so we turned to a place where strong opinions about inconsequential things are legion, the Internet.

Users at www.mboxcommunity.com, a leading Matchbox fan site, gave the toy a fair rating.

Some took issue with its design, however.

"The red paint looks thick on the top," a user named *gimmematchbox* wrote.

Oh, burn!

With our civic pride wounded, we decided to call our new best friends at Everett Transit for solace. Following is a sampling of the Matchbox forum's remarks, with reaction from Steffani Lillie, project manager for city transit.

User jtl46: "I don't mind its scale, because Matchbox will always be this size. But I think the casting could be done better to show correct proportions. The main culprit is the wheels."

Lillie: "We actually would prefer the wheels were a little smaller, but then again, it is a toy."

User Bill Manzke: "Transit buses are rear engine, rear wheel drive, so the bottom detail is completely wrong."

Lillie: "Buses are rear wheel drive. I honestly haven't taken any out of the box to look at the bottom detail. ... I don't see any engine work."

User FirebirdIV: "Striking and sophisticated design and colors."

Lillie: "We really like to hear that."

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The deal

Everett Transit wanted a toy bus to illustrate to school kids that the vehicles can carry more people than a car. City representatives called Mattel Inc. to see what was had available.

Mattel said it didn't have anything in mind, but it would consider adding an Everett Transit-inspired model to its Matchbox line. It liked how the bus looked.

In April 2008, three months before Everett Transit celebrated its 115th anniversary, the City Council signed off on the giving Mattel the ability to produce toys based on Everett buses.

Now, for the next three years, whenever Mattel puts out a line of toys based on Everett's red and gray bus, the city gets 12 of those toy buses for free. No money changes hands.