

# Rapid transit backers determined to keep funding

By TIM RICHARD

Many government leaders have predicted that President Reagan's budget-cutting measures will squelch development of rapid transit in southeastern Michigan but friends of rapid transit say it's too early to sound the death knell.

"They are looking to two key Republicans — Gov. William G. Milliken and U.S. Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis — to maintain a flow of federal transit aid."

Marvin Meltzer, who handles inter-governmental relations for the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA), believes there are "indications, both yea and nay." "There's no reason to believe the ball game is over. I'm optimistic," he said. SEMTA's \$1.4 billion 1990 transportation plan is aimed at commuter rail

and buses. Its most publicized feature, however, is a proposed light rail rapid transit line along Woodward from downtown Detroit to 11 Mile in Royal Oak including a planned underground segment (read subway) from downtown to McNichols Road in Detroit.

PRESIDENT REAGAN's budget message proposes to reduce federal expenditures by \$41.4 billion for fiscal 1982, in part by delaying rapid transit projects.

"I disagree with the Reagan people," said U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, whose 2nd District includes Livonia. "It (rapid transit) is an investment in the broad sense."

"Toronto, BART (San Francisco) — every area where I've seen rapid transit, it has an enormous impact on jobs. It was bad taste for Detroit Mayor Coleman Young to call it (opposition) rac-

ist. Rapid transit would be partnership of suburbs and city and business."

Pursell, who in his third term has just won a seat on the transportation appropriations subcommittee, is cultivating Drew Lewis, a Pennsylvanian rather than a Westerner. Pursell calls him "a bright, shining star, pragmatic, specific, rational; reasonable."

PURSELL MET with Lewis during the Reagan Administration's budget briefings and worked to put Lewis in contact with Gov. Milliken, a booster of rapid transit.

"I suggested to the governor's office that we meet over the weekend," Pursell said last week.

Milliken has made a slowdown in "urban sprawl" and preservation of cities key elements in his administration's policy. Milliken is widely expected to carry SEMTA's ball on rapid transit,



U.S. Rep. CARL PURSELL Sees transit as investment

especially after the defeat of President Jimmy Carter left Mayor Young without a White House connection.

In Detroit last week, Lewis said the rapid transit line and downtown people-mover face some delay, but held out strong hope the Reagan Administration would honor the \$600 million commitment to SEMTA made in the closing days of the Ford Administration in 1976.

REP. WILLIAM Brodhead, D-Detroit, whose 17th District includes Redford, Farmington and Southfield, said halting rapid transit construction "is a short-sighted policy because, as petroleum becomes more expensive, people will be ever more dependent on mass transit."

"I hope that (Reagan's proposed slowdown) will be an area where Congress will take a look. If Congress cuts

it, it won't matter what decision the Reagan Administration makes because there won't be enough money," Brodhead said.

During budget briefings with the Capitol Hill press corps, a Reagan official remarked that "people in Sioux Falls don't want to pay for rapid transit so that people in Los Angeles can get to work faster."

It underscored Reagan's campaign strategy, which was to target cities of 40,000 or less population. Small cities don't have the interest in public transportation that large cities have.

To this Brodhead replied: "People from Sioux Falls benefit from agricultural subsidies and irrigation projects that all taxpayers pay for."

"The bulk of the funding for transportation has always been federal. The freeways. The federal land grants to the railroads.

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