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35 attend 'involvement' hearing

By TIM RICHARD

"UMTA is a \$12-a-a-gee federal agency. They don't like to spend money," said Clarence Genette, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

"They go through all sorts of delays. But it's good that they make us do these analyses."

Genette was talking about the Urban Mass Transit Administration, the agency that will ultimately supply 80 per cent of the hundreds of millions of dollars the region will need to build a rapid transit system.

He was speaking Thursday at one of the required public information meetings SEMTA held to get citizen involvement in selection of the routing study.

About 35 persons attended the session in the Oak Park Community Building. Most were officials and staff members of SEMTA and the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments, various municipal officials, League of Women Voters members with their ever-present notebooks, high school students doing term papers and perhaps one or two common garden-variety citizens.

WHAT SEMTA MUST do at this point is draft three systems of hardware that it considers most cost effective.

The options: An all-bus system that could carry 3,000 passengers an hour in one direction in one lane, an exclusive bus lane that could carry 8,000 passengers per hour in one direction, light rail, the new name for the old streetcar, which could carry 12,000 per hour, rapid transit trains, which could either be on steel rails or rubber wheels, 24,000 passengers an hour, or electric commuter trains, 16,000 passengers an hour, and people movers, small, automatically operated cars for short distances.

Genette said UMTA would review

SEMTA's choices, decide which to finance and fund detailed plans. If there are any federal funds left.

While only \$1 billion is left in the federal transit program, Genette is certain more federal money will be available. "The federal isn't satisfied. Congress won't stop."

Here are some of the audience questions and the answers given by Genette and other members of his panel:

Q. Would the entire region have one kind of rolling stock? Or would there conceivably be rail in the Woodward corridor, monorail in the Island corridor and a subway in the downtown area?

A. There could be such a mix, but it's uncommon and unlikely, said Genette.

George Woods, SEMTA's director of engineering planning, said the mix would be determined by what has the least impact during construction and operation on neighborhoods, energy consumption and other such factors.

Q. Won't this plan be turned down by the people in the suburbs?

A. David Shepherd, vice chairman of SEMTA, said a \$1.1 billion bond issue was defeated—"not the plan itself but the method of financing. It was a shame it was turned down. It was not properly understood."

Joseph Bianco Jr., SEMTA board chairman, said residents in Wayne and Oakland counties favored the bond issue, as did the Woodward corridor communities in Oakland County. But the bond issue was to cover end-state freight train service, too, which complicated the matter in the public's mind.

"It was the old story. We don't understand the problems of Algonia with gravel

or grain elevators. We needed to do a greater job of public education."

Q. What check will the public have on your group?

A. Marilyn Thayer, SEMTA board member, said hearings will be conducted, and all SEMTA board meetings the third Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. in the downtown Detroit offices are open to the public.

"We held public hearings on our budget (it was at 10 a.m. May 17) and our annual plan. You can call from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for information or write to us," she said.

"Frankly, I don't know how we can get ahead," added Bianco, noting the SEMTA information and complaint service (800-313) takes 4,000 calls a week (Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

Q. Why do you charge fares that are higher than other cities?

A. Bianco said Los Angeles' system is funded by a one per cent sales tax that other regions or less have a 15-cent fare, but it gets \$60 million through a sales tax system. We have a low amount of subsidy," he said.

Shepherd, who is mayor of Oak Park, said his city has arranged for SEMTA bus service to Metropolitan Beach during the summer. Fare will be 10 cents.

To a question on reduced fares for senior citizens, Woods said SEMTA is required to charge only half fare on regular routes but full fare on special or charter services.

Q. Won't UMTA be reluctant to fund rapid transit because of the problems at BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit), San Francisco's automated hardware?

A. "I'll have anything to do with it."

Extra road money goes to fix potholes

Operating economies at the Oakland County Road Commission last year produced a year-end budget surplus of \$1 million, analyses of the road agency's 1975 financial records indicate.

The board of county road commissioners said the money that was unspent in the 1975 road commission budget will be used to accelerate a war on potholes in both gravel and paved roads throughout the county.

The county road commissioners—Fred L. Harris, John R. Ouse, Jr., and William M. Richards—said in a statement that the 1975 economies will permit the road commission to repair 1,800 miles of gravel roads and to repair exactly twice the volume of potholes provided for in the road commission's original 1974 budget.

THE ROAD commission's actual 1975 operating costs were \$81,300 less than the \$11,801,000 budgeted, the road commission said. That particular economy was our largest one and is directly attributable to operating efficiencies of the road commission management team. The first large economy in the 1975 construction program was largely due to the fact that bids

from contractors were on average significantly lower than we anticipated.

The construction program used \$410,000 less than the \$1,111,000 budgeted for 1975, they added.

Also contributing to the budget surplus was revenue that exceeded estimate by one-fourth of one per cent. That accounted for \$22,000 of the budget surplus.

THE ECONOMICS and the small wind fall in revenue add to an expected budget surplus of \$1,254,304, the road commissioners said. They said adjustments to reflect deferral of four construction programs budgeted for 1975 diminish that figure by \$208,000 to an actual total of \$1,046,304.

The road commissioners said an independent financial audit of road construction records for 1975 is nearing completion by Plante & Moran, the Southfield public accounting firm that also performed the road commission's 1974 audit. They said the auditor's report will be published in full in the forthcoming annual report of the road commission.

O'Hara backers plan May rally

The formation of the Oakland County O'Hara for U.S. Senate Committee has been announced by committee co-chairman Allen Zernmel of Birmingham and Senator Gelman of West Bloomfield Township. Both men are attorneys and Democratic Party activists.

The group plans a rally from 7-11 p.m. May 23 at American Legion Post 508 at Twelve Mile and Rochester roads in Royal Oak. The rally will include an appearance by U.S. Rep. James O'Hara, five live and hours of dinner.

O'Hara, who is running for the senate seat of retiring Sen. Philip Hart, currently represents the 12th Congressional District which includes parts of Oakland, Macomb and St. Clair counties.

The U.S. Democrat has represented the City of Rochester and a portion of Avon Township since 1972.

Joining Gelman and Zernmel in leadership positions on the committee are Debbie Goldberg of Oak Park and Roger Marx of Bloomfield Hills, a member of the faculty at Oakland University, who will act as publicity director for the committee.

Also serving on the committee are Eugene Kuby of Bloomfield Hills and Stephen Cooper, a Southfield councilman.

Date for disaster assistance is May 18

William J. Meier, federal Small Business Administration's disaster branch manager, said May 18 is the closing date for disaster assistance as a result of the March icing, high winds, flooding and tornado in Oakland County.

Any inquiries concerning the program or applications should be addressed to the SBA Theater Branch Office, Patrick V. Hesterman Federal Building, Macomb, 477 Michigan Ave., Detroit 6226, or phone 225-9228.

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and Genette, "you will have a man on the train and he will have something to do. You can't have a man going to sleep on an 18 m.p.h. train."

Genette later amended his comments to replace the word "train" with the less vocal term "operator."



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