

Transit battle near peak; suburban lawmakers split

By TIM RICHARD

The Michigan Senate has passed one version, and the House of Representatives has passed another of a bill to fund rapid transit construction and reconstruction of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) board.

Big battles in conference committee are due over what kind of tax to levy to raise the region's \$12 million annual share of the transit funding and how big a chunk of the SEMTA board will be awarded to the City of Detroit.

Three suburbanities—two in the senate and one in the house—were in the thick of the maneuvering.

STATE REP. W. V. Sandy, Brotherston Farmington, cast the lone dissenting vote Monday night as the house joins and counties committee passed the version.

The vote was 81-1.

A full house vote was due sometime between late Wednesday and the end of the week. Brotherston said he was ready with a tactical amendment to make the newest version of Senate Bill 125 more acceptable to the suburbs.

It is a version would give SEMTA a 15-member board, five appointed by the mayor of Detroit, three for suburban Wayne County, three for Oakland County, two for Macomb County, and two for the four smaller counties. This is substantially the plan agreed to by Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Gov. William Milliken.

Four of the ten Detroit members would be appointed by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, three by county boards of commissioners and three by the governor.

Ryan's version calls for raising rapid transit funds from the three metropolitan counties of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb. Half would be raised by increasing the motor vehicle transfer tax from \$2 to \$6, the other half by raising the property transfer tax from \$1 to \$2 per \$100 to \$3.90 per \$100.

BROTHERSTON BRANDED the bill "too damn tough on Oakland County."

Oakland would end up picking up 32 per cent of the total cost. When you compare that to a population that's 31 per cent of the tri-county area, we pick up 11 per cent more of the cost than our population would warrant.

The long-term Farmington representative said the vehicle transfer tax would be fairer than the property transfer tax and promised to seek an appropriate amendment.

Brotherston said population figures were shifting. SEMTA board seat from Detroit to suburban Wayne County. He also factors giving SEMTAC more apartment power provided SEMTAC picks persons from lists provided by local officials in cities or counties.

"I'm concerned that the governor or SEMTAC will appoint people from those counties who will have too many business or other interests in Detroit. I would like to expect enough power elements so that no one element can get a stranglehold."

THE SENATE last week gave 24 approval to its version of the bill.

Favoring it were state senators Bill S. Hoffman (D-Madison Heights), acting chairman of the sponsoring appropriations committee, Daniel Cooper (D-Oak Park) and William Faust (D-Westland).

Opposed were senators Carl Purcell (R-Hyde Park), a member of the appropriations committee, and Donald Bishop (R-Northeast).

The senate version, said Hoffman, relied solely on the automobile title transfer tax applied in all seven counties of the region. It also created a 21-member SEMTA board with four Detroit seats.

Hoffman dislikes some elements of the house version. "The house is talking a three-county tax. That's a bad deal. People in Livingston County and others will use the system."

"To tell you the truth, the tax ought to be statewide," said Hoffman.

PURCELL, who had agreed to many principles in the appropriations committee meeting, voted against the bill when it was on paper.

"It's a loosely written bill. It's shaky in language," Purcell said. "I didn't like the whole picture."

Purcell said Democratic leaders apparently were planning to agree to anything in the senate, no matter how loosely drawn, in order to get it through the upper chamber. When the plan appears to be to pass the version they really want in the house, get the conference committee to accept the house version and push the conference report through the senate, he said.

Oakland vets bill veto upheld

The Michigan House of Representatives failed in almost a party-line vote to override Gov. William Milliken's veto of a bill he said would have weakened the hand of the Oakland County executive.

The vote was 68-36, six votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

The failure to override was a victory for County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, a Republican seeking re-election and a defeat for his Democratic challenger, State Rep. Philip H. Mastin of Hazel Park.

THE ISSUE was whether the county department of veterans affairs should be an independent department or come under the jurisdiction of the county executive.

Murphy and Milliken argued it should. Mastin contended that an independent veterans office would retain more community involvement.

House Bill 1445 would have amended the law allowing counties to adopt the executive system. Just 130 to place the veterans affairs office in the exempt list of offices thus remaining it from the executive's jurisdiction.

While the bill would have applied state-wide only, Oakland County so far has adopted the county executive system, although other counties are reportedly considering it.

SUPPORTING MILLIKEN'S veto were Republican House members James Leitch of Birmingham, Mel Larson of Oxford and Ruth McNamee of Birmingham.

Voting to override were Democrats Joseph Forster of Oak Park and Sal Rucica of Sterling Heights.

Rep. W. V. Brotherston, Farmington, did not vote. His absence had the effect of a vote against overriding the veto.

MASTIN CALLED Milliken's veto a tremendous disservice to the veterans of the county.

In my opinion it is most important that we retain as much community involvement in government as possible. Only through citizen active participation in the governing process can officials be truly effective in meeting the needs of the people they are elected to represent.

It is apparent, however, that Oakland County Executive Murphy does not share this philosophy. He has shown he is incapable of cooperating with others in county government. We have decided to try to control their method.

He has moved to take over the veterans services office, which has a good record of effective aid to veterans and of ability to work with citizens.

When independent community boards and commissions are effectively advisors, they should remain so and not be forced under the authority of the county executive," said Mastin, who is unopposed in the Aug. 2 primary for the Democratic nomination for county executive.

MILLIKEN, WHO VETED the bill, said he had retained the office as an independent department after a county chose to adopt a unified form of county government.

A county choosing to adopt a unified form of government, meaning a county executive or manager, is acting to exert more local control over its governmental operations. This bill, by amending Act 130 to exempt county departments of veterans affairs from potential reorganization by the county, would have the effect of further limiting the degree of local control over governmental organization in those counties which exercise the options available under Act 130.

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