

SEMTA's transit picks cover gamut

By TIM RICHARD

Only one thing was clearly decided last month when the board of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority narrowed its list of 13 rapid transit alternatives to four.

The Michigan Avenue corridor is an excellent candidate for commuter rail service.

Otherwise, the nine-member SEMTA board picked one option from every kind of public transit rolling stock in selecting its four alternatives. They include:

•Extensive bus service—two to 12 minutes—in the Woodward and Gratiot corridors.

•Heavy rail (subway, in part) in the Woodward corridor to Eight Mile and the Gratiot corridor to Connor.

•Light rail (updated streetcar) in the Woodward corridor to Sixteen Mile and Gratiot to Fifteen Mile. In addition, there is an all-bus option.

LARRY SALCI, SEMTA's new general manager, emphasized to a suburban audience last week that only those three corridors would have ridership for anything more elaborate than buses.

But Salci added suburbanites were

overlooking SEMTA plans to put intermediate level bus service on three other corridors and seven "peripheral" routes.

The corridors getting intermediate level service will be Fort, Mound and Schoolcraft-Davison (the nearly completed Jeffries Freeway). Peripheral routes will be Telegraph, Southfield, Plymouth, 148th, Eight Mile, Big Beaver and Warren.

Salci spoke Friday to a group of western Wayne County officials, who have been disturbed at what they perceive as a lack of concern for their transit problems and too much money being spent on heavy equipment for Detroit.

N sooner had the meeting ended

than Wayne County Commissioner Royce Smith (D-Belleville) charged SEMTA with "giving the shaft to western Wayne County."

DEFENDING SEMTA's alternatives analysis, Salci said, "We studied all modes of travel. We had a computer simulation model to tell what the 'world' will be like in 1983. We tested with several hundred variables."

Salci said the TALUS study of the 1960s—a forerunner of the current regional 1990 plan—tested 112,000 households. To criticisms that SEMTA's plans disregard current population and employment figures, Salci replied that "households determine patterns

of travel—not population and employment."

The SEMTA manager said his agency has problems dealing with railroads over passenger systems because freight shipments have priority and for other reasons. Among those other reasons: The Grand Trunk Western Railroad (Detroit to Pontiac) has Canadian ownership; the C & O (Detroit to Plymouth and beyond) is one of the few receiving no federal subsidy and is thus in a position of being tough to deal with.

JUST EXPANDING existing services, with no rapid transit system, SEMTA will run up operating deficit by 1985 of some \$100 million a year, Salci said.

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County OKs 15 sirens

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners has authorized the purchase of 15 sirens for five local areas as part of the countywide tornado siren system.

The board took this action April 17 after reaching cost-sharing agreements between the county and the five areas.

Federal funds, which will take care of half of the cost and installation of the sirens, could not be spent until these agreements had been reached.

The county will install two sirens in Pontiac Township, nine in West Bloomfield Township, two in Beverly Hills, one in Holly and one in Milford.

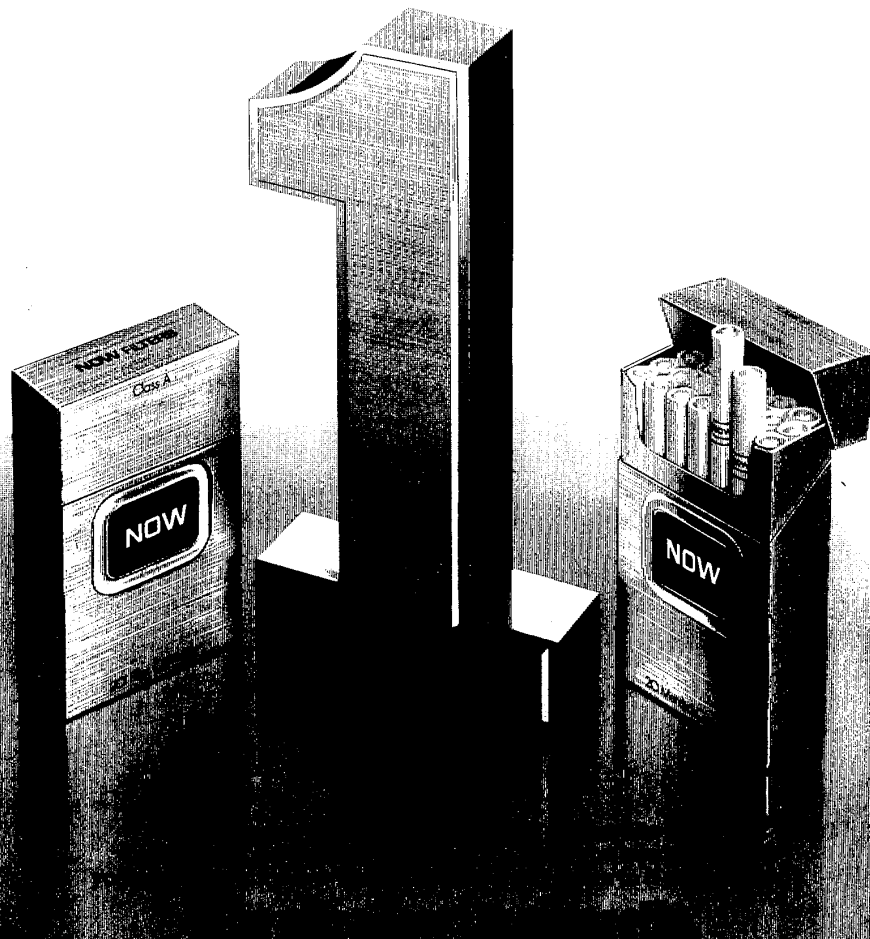
The countywide alert system is expected to be in operation by March, 1978. Altogether, 120 sirens will be activated by radio from the National Weather Service station at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The system will include 48 new sirens, 70 refurbished sirens and a communications system.

Countywide, the new siren equipment will cost \$233,000 plus an additional \$71,000 for installation for a total of \$304,000.

The federal government will pick up half, or \$152,000; the county 24 per cent, or \$73,000; and local units 26 per cent, or \$79,000.

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