

# SEMTA leaders praise, deplore Oakland threat

By TIM RICHARD

One key member of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority thinks Oakland County's threat to pull out of the seven-county agency was a "healthy and constructive" political reminder "not to forget about Oakland County again."

Another member thinks Oakland's threat to quit Oct. 1 would "play into the hands of the individual they were objecting to"—namely, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

Several agree there's little chance the 15-member SEMTA board will go through with a plan to build a subway, a dream of Mayor Young to which many suburbanites object.

And, they add, the Michigan Legislature—not the SEMTA board—is to blame for Oakland's O-CART bus program not being in place yet.

JOSEPH BIANCO, Bloomfield Hills resident and veteran SEMTA board member from Oakland County, thinks Oakland commissioners made a shrewd move, April 20, in threatening to pull out.

"I was pleased (County Executive) Dan Murphy left so good about his meeting with the mayor and Gov. Milliken, Murphy and the majority of the commissioners felt they had been heard."

In that meeting April 7, Young agreed to "let the experts decide" on a subway, and Murphy agreed to vote an earlier board resolution pulling Oakland out of SEMTA. But the board resolved April 20 to withdraw on Oct. 1 unless there was progress on O-CART and SEMTA, and Young agreed not to push for an "extensive" subway.

"It was a responsible challenge on the part of Oakland County commissioners to all involved in public transportation not to forget Oakland County again," said Bianco.

But Bianco thinks fears that an expensive subway will be built are groundless. "The governor's transportation package asks only \$57.5 million for non-road purposes—buses, aerobics, ports and the rest. SEMTA is targeted for only \$18.18 million."

That, Bianco contends, is too little for SEMTA to put up the region's 20 per cent share of a light rail-bus package. The federal government has pledged \$600 million as its share.

"THEY'RE PLAYING into the hands of the individual they were objecting to," said Livonia Mayor

## In bad health

# Lazaros dies behind bars

Peter Lazaros, whose health problems frequently kept him out of prison, died Wednesday afternoon in Oakland County jail.

The self-proclaimed mobster died at 1:30 p.m., twelve hours after he had been treated for chest pains at Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital. He was taken there at 1:30 a.m. and returned to the jail an hour later. He was checked hourly by a doctor, and a doctor was with him when he died, according to Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen.

An autopsy was scheduled Wednesday afternoon.

Lazaros, 44, of Troy, had been in jail since April 13 when he was arrested and arraigned on 10 charges from five

cities. He was being held in Oakland County jail in lieu of \$124,000 bond while awaiting preliminary examinations on charges ranging from extortion to a nonsufficient funds check.

At the time of his arrest, Lazaros was taken to Pontiac General Hospital because he complained of chest pains. He was on medication when he died, according to Spreen.

THROUGHOUT HIS criminal career, Lazaros sought early freedom from jail because of his health problems.

Convicted in 1971 for lying to a grand jury, Lazaros' sentencing was delayed because of heart problems. He was parole early when he complained of

similar heart problems.

He was on parole at the time of his April arrest.

According to Spreen, the mobster had an operation several months ago to implant a pacemaker in his chest.

Lazaros' personal problems were compounded in March of 1977 when his seven-year-old daughter, Ann Nicole, was killed in a car accident. The accident also permanently disabled his wife.

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