

# Buses spread in northwest suburbs

(Continued from page 14)

express service, the capillaries along the local and mile roads have been seeing a little faster progress.

The Nankin Transit Commission operates 11 buses in Garden City, Inkster, Wayne, Westland and Canton Township. NTC Administrator Glen Shaw says the service is carrying about 5,500 persons a month. He expects service to peak at 7,000 a month.

SEMTA passes a subsidy onto the NTC and also leases the local service buses.

A recurring problem has been the manufacturing of new buses. The political problem in Washington and Lansing is what equipment to require on buses so that the handicapped can board.

Meanwhile, NTC must use old buses which break down, running up repair costs and interrupting service.

Redford Township has operated a dial-a-ride transit (DART) service since July of 1975. Transit Coordinator Ronald Caryl directs a fleet of six mini-buses—"when they're all operating"—and promises service within 30 minutes.

DART carries about 5,000 passengers an average month, and this rises to 6,000 in the cold weather months of October to March, Caryl said.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, DART carries passengers to Livonia Mall. On Tuesdays and Thursdays it journeys to Wonderland Center in Livonia.

SEMTA underwrites two-thirds of the operating deficit, and Redford provides its one-third share from federal CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) funds. If CETA funds run out, Redford may have to consider assessing local taxes, as in Ann Arbor and Birmingham.

Caryl said there's also a possibility SEMTA will inaugurate a countywide E&H (elderly and handicapped) service, eliminating the need for Redford's DART.

A CLASSICAL kind of suburban



Two new sights in Observeland communities in the last year have been a SEMTA express bus and the completed I-96 (Jeffries) freeway. (Staff photo)

route was SEMTA's very first in the western suburbs.

It begins at Livonia Mall, Seven Mile at Middlebelt, with senior citizen housing near by; travels down Middlebelt to Wonderland Center at Plymouth Road; then swings eastward to Inkster Road and south to Wayne County General Hospital.

It demonstrates an elemental truth about transit planning in this region: While TALUS had concentrated on planning commuter work trips, the earliest and most significant gains in public transportation have been to serve senior citizens and people without cars.

Another interesting route starts at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College at Orchard Lake Road and the I-496 freeway in Farmington Hills. It wiggles along 13 Mile, Middlebelt, 12 Mile, Lahser, 10 Mile, Scotia, Nine Mile and Woodward to downtown Detroit.

TWO NEW bus terminals will aid SEMTA's administration and maintenance work.

The Oakland terminal on Maple Road in Troy was opened a year ago. A Wayne County terminal, due for completion this year, is under construction on Henry Ruff Road in Inkster.

Politically, the northern and western suburbs have had little clout with SEMTA.

Under a reorganization which took effect last year, Detroit has five seats, suburban Wayne County three and Oakland County three on a 15-member board.

Two of the so-called suburban Wayne representatives are Grosse Pointe area representatives with business offices in downtown Detroit. This leaves Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara as the sole representative for a million western Wayne residents.

All three Oakland board members are from the 36-square-mile Birmingham-Bloomfield area, with none from the rest of the 864 square miles in the state's second most populous county.

## WHAT OF THE future?

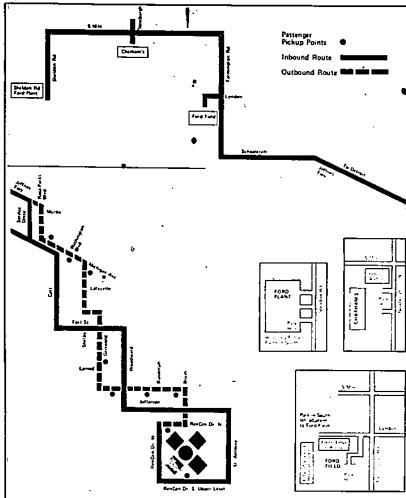
Look for westward extension of the mile road routes through Farmington, Livonia, Plymouth, Westland and Canton Township. Also look for new service on the north-south mile roads, since not all roads lead to Detroit.

Watch bus purchase developments. SEMTA has been prevented from ordering new buses by a civil rights-type fight over whether all rolling stock must be equipped with hydraulic lifts (at \$10,000 apiece or so for the handicapped.) It's a tug-of-war between the federal government, the state legislature and the courts.

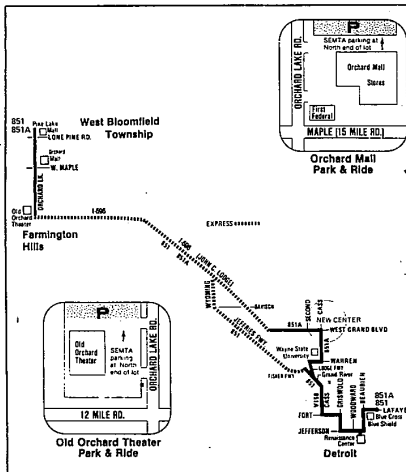
Keep an eye on the rival "total transportation" funding bills in the legislature. The Milliken Administration and the Democratic legislative leadership have been pushing packages of tax bills that would aid roads and public transportation. Rep. Tom Brown (D-Westland) and some county road commissions are pushing a more road-oriented package.

Gasoline prices will likely increase, as will the cost of parking. Freeways and surface roads are unlikely to get less crowded.

Don't expect to see the entire region on wheels and the private automobile become obsolete—not by a long shot. SEMTA is thinking in terms of ultimately boosting ridership on public transportation to the 10 per cent mark.



The park-and-ride service from Plymouth Township through Livonia to downtown Detroit is being called a delightful success by SEMTA. Buses depart from the first stop at 6:30, 6:45 and 7:05 a.m. and leave Renaissance Center at 4:40, 5:10 and 5:35 p.m. The trip takes about an hour.



Eight buses go downtown and seven return on this park-and-ride route that starts in West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills. Departures are from 6:30 to 7:45 a.m. Evening return trips leave from 4:15 to 5:30 p.m.

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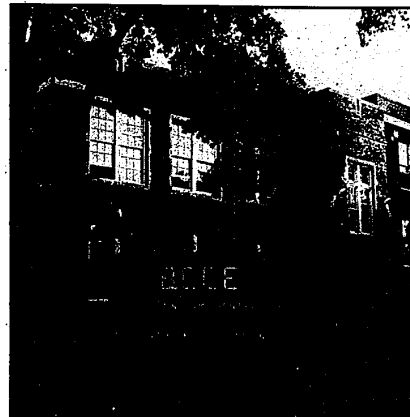
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