

# Close vote hands suburbanite SEMTA gavel

By TIM RICHARD

The 8-7 split which elected Livonian Edward H. McNamara chairman of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority board tells two important things about the future of public transit:

•The suburbs have a majority.  
•Because it will take 10 votes to decide a major capital plan, it may be that neither a light rail rapid transit plan nor the all-bus alternative favored by some suburbanites will have a majority. There may be a deadlock when the SEMTA board next week tries to make its final choice from among seven alternatives it has been analyzing for more than a year.

McNAMARA, mayor of the fifth

largest city in Michigan and a SEMTA board member for a year, defeated Dwight Havens, who as first vice-chairman had been in line to get the chairmanship.

Havens is the recently retired president of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce. Although he is a Grosse Pointe resident, his chamber affiliation places him squarely in the "Detroit" camp.

Supporting McNamara were: all three Oakland County representatives—Joseph P. Bianco Jr., Henry M. Hogan Jr. and R.J. Alexander; two suburban Wayne votes—McNamara's own and DeWitt Henry of the downriver area; two Macomb County representatives—Charles Chaignan and Thomas Tomlinson; and Marilyn

Thayer of Washtenaw County.

Henry's vote made the difference. Henry was elected to the SEMTA board by the Wayne County Board of Commissioners last month, replacing J.A. (Art) Mullen, a Grosse Pointe with downtown Detroit business interests.

Supporting Havens were: five Detroit representatives—outgoing chairman Tom Turner, Dauris Jackson, Rudy McCullough, Robert Miller and Richard Platt; his own vote; and George Labodny, an appointee of Gov. William Milliken who was formerly with Detroit Edison Co.

MOVING UP from second vice-chairman to first vice-chairman was Hogan, former co-publisher of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers who is currently launching a national suburban publication.

Named second vice-chairman was Mrs. Jackson, a Detroit teacher trainer and an elected member of the Wayne State University Board of Governors.



EDWARD H. McNAMARA  
A shift at SEMTA

In a show of unanimity that came too late, the board passed a resolution making the chairmanship election unanimous.

THE BOARD is scheduled to decide

Tuesday—if it can—among three batches of alternative transit systems for the seven-county region. These are:

•The theoretical "do-nothing" alternative—no improvement or expansion of services. It is the standard against which the others are being measured.

•Two "low capital" alternatives. One consists of expanded commuter rail service to Pontiac, Ann Arbor and Mt. Clemens; a people-mover system in downtown Detroit, improved regular and small bus service, and 195 express buses. The second would be the same as the first plus 80 express buses in the Washtenaw corridor.

•Four "light rail" alternatives, with various portions underground. Light rail is a modern version of the old electric streetcar, with one to three cars in a train.

The light rail alternatives have caused great political controversy for the past two years.

Many suburban politicians condemn it for its cost, contending it would cut up almost all the \$600 million capital grant pledged by the federal govern-

ment in the dying days of the Ford administration.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young wants it because it would bring construction jobs to the city and would avoid splitting the city as freeways have done.

Several suburban board members who once favored a rail rapid transit system have cooled in the last year or two, stunned by the high estimated construction costs. There is also the strong prospect that the Carter administration, which wants to balance the federal budget by 1981, will put up no more than the pledged \$800 million with the state putting up \$150 million or 25 per cent. With that kind of money, SEMTA would be unable to extend rapid transit lines beyond Detroit city limits.

Young, however, as optimistic he has the political clout with Carter to pry out more money.

Meanwhile, SEMTA General Mgr. Larry Salet was in Washington Wednesday meeting with members of the Michigan congressional delegation.



## Refreshingly different

Technology's relentless advance seems to know no bounds as this vending machine in a Plymouth Township party store illustrates. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

## Traffic safety signs

Motorists traveling multi-lane highways are given advance notice of "left turn only" and "no left turn" lane designations by internally lighted "case" signs hanging between traffic lights.

According to John R. Gross Jr., chairman of the Board of Oakland County Road Commissioners, the signs are readable from 300 feet away, and are an important part of modern tech-

nology contributing to traffic safety.

The signs cost from \$148 to \$284 each, he said, depending on whether they are for one lane only or any combination up to all four ways. The road commission recently awarded the purchase of 40 case signs to Lauren Associates, Inc. of Birmingham, at a cost of \$8,500.

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