

# Detroit area lagging in mass transit funding

Detroit is the nation's fifth most populated urbanized area, yet it ranks 34th among the nation's 50 most populous areas in getting public transportation dollars.

The metro Detroit area—Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties—taking in a population of 3,970,384, according to the federal Department of Transportation, has received about \$72 million from Jan. 1, 1965 to Sept. 30, 1977 for an average of \$18.14 per capita.

During the same period, the nation's four largest urbanized areas have been ahead of the Detroit area in the amount of federal money returned to them for transportation projects and general assistance to operate transit services, the federal statistics show.

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) chairman David Shepherd attributed the area's poor ranking to lack of a regional transportation plan.

Shepherd pointed out, however, that southeast Michigan has made progress recently in getting its share of transit funding into the area.

"We do have a commitment of \$600 million from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), and the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) has been receiving increased funding and has improved its service throughout the region."

Shepherd was referring to a 1977 commitment of \$600 million for transit

projects made by UMTA during the Ford Administration which was later upheld by a letter of intent from UMTA officials to SEMTA under the Carter Administration.

"But the \$600 million will not come in a lump sum," Shepherd said. "It will be spread over many years and cover a variety of transit improvements throughout southeast Michigan."

Shepherd says the DOT ranking dramatizes the need for southeastern Michigan to reach an agreement on a regional system as soon as possible.

SEMTA is currently looking at three alternatives for a regional system which considers various combinations of buses and rail vehicles. The SEMTA board of directors is expected to select a final alternative after further study this year.

The most populated urbanized area is New York-Northeastern New Jersey. It has received the largest amount of funding over the 12-year period—nearly \$1.9 billion—yet averages \$16.53 per capita, and ranks sixth.

The next most populous urbanized area is Los Angeles. It received a total of nearly \$154 million, with a per capita of \$18.44, ranking 32d.

The third largest area is Chicago, with more than \$721 million and \$107.45 per capita, ranking seventh. Philadelphia is the fourth largest urbanized area, and it received nearly \$36.5 million for \$9.13 per capita, placing eighth.

The Atlanta, Ga., area has been the most successful over the past 12 years in receiving federal transportation grants. It ranks first with \$744 million,

and \$534.73 per capita.

Washington, D.C., places second (\$341.88 per capita), Boston, third (\$285.30 per capita), Baltimore, fourth (\$248.94 per capita), and San Francisco, fifth (\$186.72 per capita).

SEMCOG is the regional planning organization for highway and public transportation in the seven-county area of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne. It also reviews local applications for federal grants to carry out local projects.

## Detroit water department audit mandated by new law

Suburban customers of the Detroit water and sewer system will have a clearer picture of the system's financial affairs under a new state law.

The law was sponsored by State Rep. John Bennett (D-Redford) and signed by Gov. Milliken.

Another bill sponsored by Bennett to give suburban customers a voice in the operation of the water system was approved by the house but has been stalled in committee in the state senate.

THE NEW LAW requires the Detroit Water and Sewer Department be audited annually by certified public accountants selected by the state legislative auditor general. The results of the audit will be made public and submitted to the governing body of each local unit of government served by the system before Dec. 1 each year.

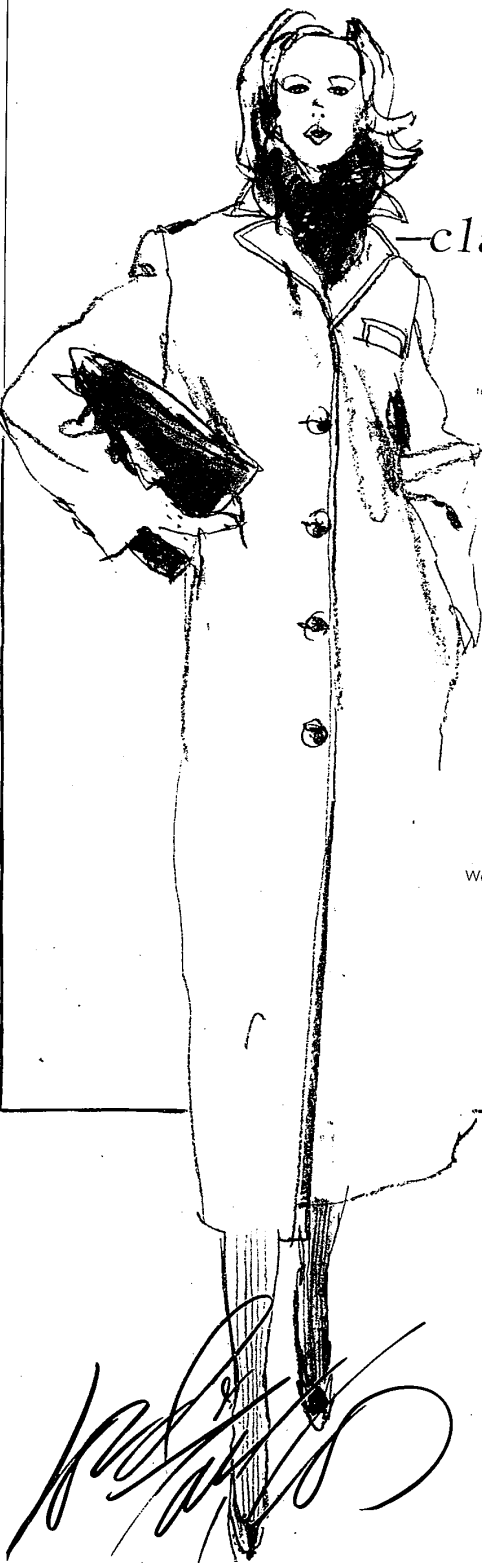
The new law further requires that there be at

least one public hearing 120 days before any proposed rate increase is scheduled to take effect. Each local unit will have to be notified of the hearing by mail.


"The new law will ensure that local units served by the Detroit water system have reliable information about the financial operation of the water department," Bennett said. "In the past, these communities have often had difficulty in obtaining information justifying rate increases and the financing of proposed capital improvement programs."

The required public hearings will provide suburban customers with some input into the rate-setting process and, together with the independent audit, they will help to expose deficiencies in the management of the department, Bennett said.

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