

Subway plan may be dead

By TIM RICHARD

Chances that Detroit will get an underground light rail rapid transit line are dying.

But because Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young is adamant that it must be built, no one is ready to announce the funeral service.

For one thing, any rail transit plan in the price range of \$750 million or more will require 20 per cent local funding in addition to the \$500 million promised by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The region has no chance of raising that kind of local money, according to officials of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

For another thing, the Michigan Legislature has stipulated, in the existing funding act, that it must have the final say over whether such a transit line will be built underground.

The legislative mood is strongly anti-subway.

"VOTERS ARE NOT willing to provide the new tax funds," said SEMTA General Manager Larry E. Salci.

He was quizzed Tuesday after U.S. Transportation Secretary Brock Adams told the Detroit Economic Club the region would have quit arguing and agree on what kind of system it wants in the Woodward corridor.

To Salci, that isn't the issue.

"The issue is whether we can go 20 cents on the dollar," he said.

He recalled that when the legislature voted early in the fall to raise the fuel and weight taxes to provide both road and public bus money, the bill passed by a single vote in the House of Repre-

analysis

sentatives, and Lt. Gov. James Dammann had to cast a tie-breaking vote in the State Senate.

And that will provide only bus money.

A subway (decision by SEMTA) will kill the whole program. That's the way I see it," Salci said.

A SEMTA board member who asked not to be identified said the board couldn't put together the required 10 votes (two-thirds majority) to approve any plan.

That is because five of the 15 SEMTA members are hand-picked by Young and two or three others are strongly influenced by the Detroit mayor.

And even if the board could get 10 votes for an underground line, the SEMTA member said, the idea couldn't be sold to the legislature.

SEMTA has no independent taxing authority of its own, unlike a home-rule city or a county. A creature of the state, SEMTA is dependent on Lansing for the legislature for its local share of transit funds.

JOSEPH P. BIANCO Jr., SEMTA board member from Oakland County, said it's unlikely the region can finance its 20 per cent share of a rapid transit system for three to five years.

"The public is not willing to vote it, and then we have the Headlee amendment," Bianco said, referring to the tax limitation proposal approved Nov. 7 by voters.

Theoretically, the state could find money for rapid transit from existing revenues. As a practical matter, there is no way legislators will acquiesce to cuts in education, social services, natural resources or courts in order to finance public transportation.

Thus, the only hope for such funding is new taxes. As of Dec. 22, when the Headlee amendment takes effect, the legislature will be unable to levy those new taxes. The only option is a public vote, which SEMTA people fear won't happen.

The DEIS analyzes several different options for rapid transit, and bus systems, including four options with different amounts of the Woodward corridor light rail line underground.

The federal government pledged \$500 million for SEMTA's capital outlay late in 1976. But the Ford Administration attached the unusual condition that the region would have to show that such a federal outlay would stimulate another \$500 million in private investment in Detroit.

Bid-taking—for I-96 ramps

The Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation Dec. 13 will take bids on a major construction project slated for the Novi Road—I-96 interchange in Novi.

The highway department plans to build two ramps in the southwest quadrant of the interchange. The construction will round out a complete interchange system in the Twelve Oaks Mall development area.

Previous contracts for interchange construction were let in August 1976 and March 1978.

In addition to the ramp construction, the department plans to demolish a temporary overpass that carried Novi Road over the freeway.

Highway department officials estimated the cost of the project at \$1.3 million. They said it could be completed next October.



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University asks \$5.8 million for nine building projects

Oakland University is seeking \$5,775,000 in state funds to support nine building or remodeling projects next year.

The requests were approved by the Board of Trustees last month and submitted to the state department of management and budget.

O.U. is asking for \$4.3 million for completion of Classroom Office Building No. 2. Ground was broken for that facility on Nov. 2. Other projects include \$350,000 to remodel Hannah Hall of Sciences; \$400,000 to continue with the second phase of planning for an addition of 2,000 gross square feet

to Kresge Library; \$210,000 to remodel Dodge Hall for a physical therapy program; and \$25,000 for initial planning for a new science building. Then the remaining funds would be used for an energy management plan, roof modification and replacement for North Foundation Hall, remodeling Meadow Brook estate buildings for student activities and storage, and air-cooling South Foundation Hall.

Completion date for the new science building and library addition is targeted for 1983-84. Completion of the other projects is hoped for in the 1979-80 fiscal year.

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