

Oak transit bid in limbo

By TOM LONERGAN

Oakland County got nary a yawn this week from the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) on the county's demand that more rapid transit dollars be spent north of Eight Mile Road.

The 15-member SEMTA Board of Directors Tuesday accepted, without discussion, the county's list of transportation demands.

These include extension of the proposed Woodward Ave. light rail line to Pontiac and a light rail spur to the Pontiac Silverdome. The light rail (modern trolley car) line, as now proposed, runs to 10 Mile Road in Royal Oak.

SEMTA OFFICIALS promised a written response by Feb. 19, the date of the next board meeting. The county had demanded a written answer by today, but backed down on that date and agreed to Feb. 19.

By that time, however, the Michigan Legislature will likely have made its decision regarding preliminary funding of the Woodward Avenue rail plan, which includes subway from downtown to McVickoh (Six Mile) Road. County officials oppose the subway because, they say, it would eat up funding for Oakland transportation improvements.

Henry Hogan, appointed to the SEMTA board by the Oakland Board of Commissioners, said SEMTA is "locked in" to its 1990 transportation plan adopted seven weeks ago.

He said meeting Oakland's demands now would delay the plan another two years because new environmental impact studies of light rail to Pontiac would be required.

A study of light rail to Pontiac as part of SEMTA's second phase of plans is a possibility, Hogan added.

COMMISSIONER JOHN Peterson, R-Rochester, a member of the county's transportation lobbying committee, said he hopes "the impact of all this may cause a delay" in the state legislature. The state holds the reins to 70 percent of the transit plan's capital cost; the remainder would be funded by the federal government.

But the Senate could vote on the preliminary funding this week. The legislature has set a Feb. 15 deadline to act on the transit plan.

SEMTA General Manager Larry E. Salci told the transit authority board Tuesday that "we believe (the legislature) will act favorably."

The Senate will vote on a funding resolution co-sponsored by State Sens. William Faust, D-Westland, Robert Geake, R-Northville, David Plawewski, D-Dearborn Heights and James DeSana, D-Wyandotte.

Geake, who is counting Republican votes, said this week the Senate vote would be "extremely close." As of Tuesday afternoon there were 17 votes for subway funding. Twenty votes are required.

A Faust aide, Bob Reinshuttle, said this week funding approval was a "good possibility" in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

PETERSON TOLD the SEMTA board that Oakland's plan was developed "to avoid a very strong move for withdrawal."

"On the line is the support of Oakland County" for SEMTA's regional plan, Peterson said after the meeting.

A number of other county officials, however, most notably County Executive Daniel Murphy, don't see Oakland leaving SEMTA soon, if at all.

Regarding withdrawal, Hogan said: "We've seen a complete reversal at the (county) board level since the extra miles (of light rail) were put in Oakland County."

Preserve those written pearls, says post office

The Postal Service announced will sponsor a National Letter Writing Week from Feb. 24 through March 1, 1980.

The objectives of the special week are to focus attention on the power of the written word and letter writing to shape opinions, preserve memories, lift spirits, and link people and to encourage more personal correspondence.

There will be special school activities, highlighted by the publication of a new 64-page book, "All About Letters," prepared by the Postal Service with the cooperation of the National Council of Teachers of English. The book is designed for students in grades six through 12 and will be distributed by the council.

During National Letter Writing Week, many post offices will offer to students special guided tours of their facilities and in some cases will send postal representatives to classrooms to talk and answer questions about the mail service.

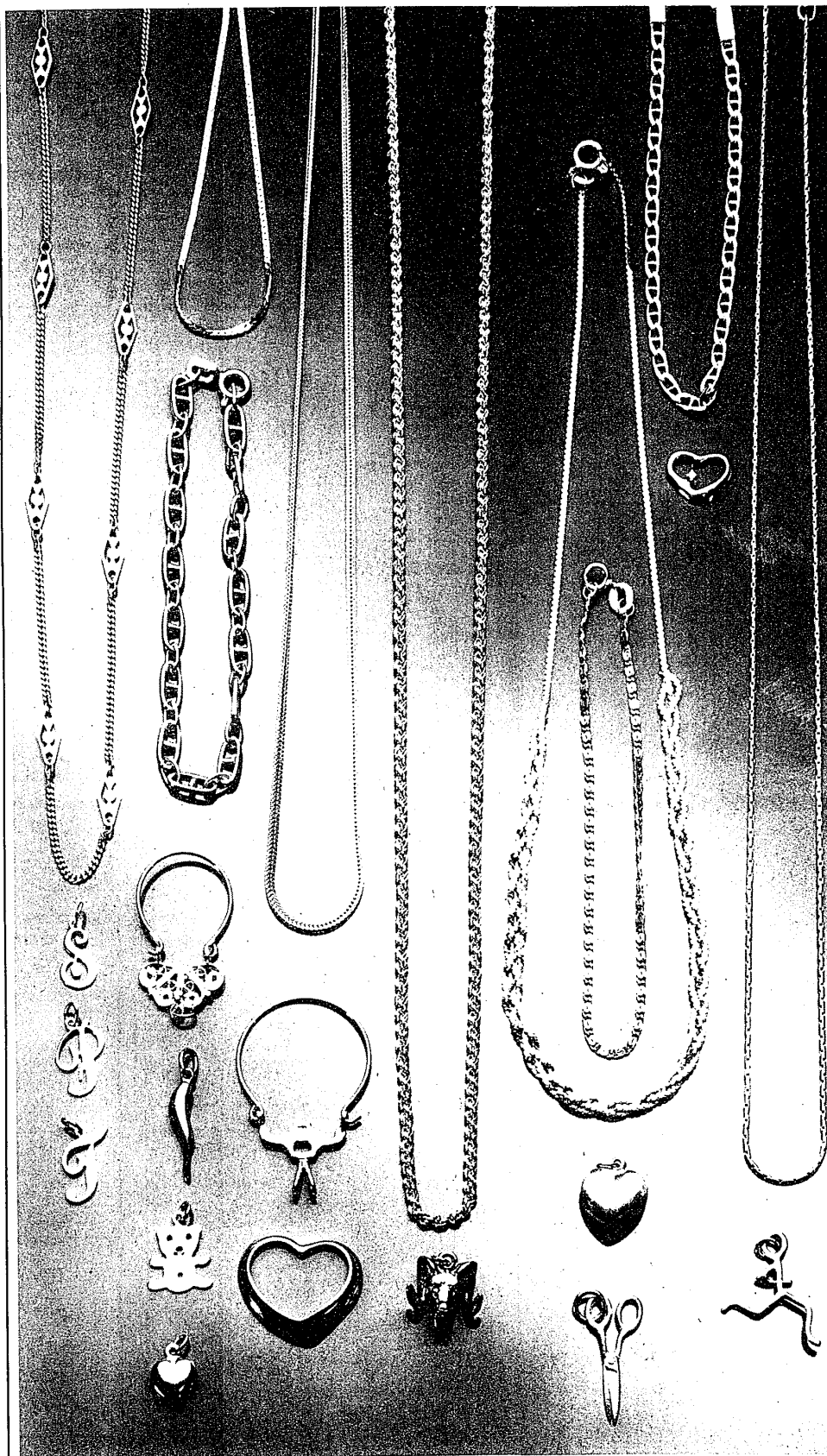
IN ADDITION to schools, National Letter Writing Week will also be observed by business, media and trade associations.

Museums, public libraries and other buildings of historic significance will be encouraged to display books about letters and letters written by famous people who have helped influence the course of human events throughout the ages.

The occasion will also be marked by the issuance of a special three-pair set of U.S. postage stamps.

Prominent Americans in all walks of life are being asked to share with the Postal Service letters from their experience that have preserved memories, shaped opinions, and lifted spirits, the three themes to be stressed during Letter Writing Week. The results of this survey will be made available during the week.

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