

Contenders differ on subway

By TIM RICHARD

Round One in a battle over the direction of public transportation will be fought tonight in Oakland County.

At stake is a seat on the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority board that is being vacated by Joseph P. Bianco Jr., who has served since SEMTA was created in 1967.

The contenders: David H. Shepherd, mayor of Oak Park and chairman of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments; Homer Case, Bloomfield Township supervisor and a former SEMCOG chairman; and Alice Schoenholz, Royal Oak commissioner and general foe of regionalism.

EACH CITY, village and township will send a representative to Birmingham City Hall where three persons will be nominated.

The question isn't whether Shepherd, Case and Mrs. Schoenholz will be nominated, but who gets the strongest support. The final selection will be made by SEMCOG's General Assembly on June 21.

Tonight's meeting shapes up as a preliminary between Shepherd, a pro-Detroit liberal Democrat, and Case, an Oakland "establishment" Republican. The unspoken issue is whether SEMTA will move in the direction of building all or part of a Woodward corridor light rail transit line underground.

Case said he would like a public vote on a subway. He's against a subway.

"A transportation program has to be flexible," Case said. "Once you build a tunnel, you become inflexible. With buses, if a route doesn't work, you just change the route of the bus. You don't have \$1.4 billion sunk into it."

"You have the Grand Trunk Western Railroad paralleling Woodward. I don't know if there's need for both (commuter rail and rapid transit), he said."

CASE'S CANDIDACY developed last weekend.

Until then, Bianco had been expected to seek re-election. But Case and persons close to Bianco said the J.L. Hudson executive from Bloomfield Hills decided against running again. Bianco was on vacation and couldn't be reached for comment.

Case was treasurer for eight years and has been supervisor for 16 years of Bloomfield Township. He was on the committee that proposed creation of SEMCOG and has served on the seven-county regional planning agency since it was formed in 1968.

Case was SEMCOG chairman in 1975-77, succeeding to the chair when Detroit Councilman Mel Ravitz resigned and later winning a term on his own. Case was in the chair when SEMCOG hired its current executive director, Michael Glusac.

SHEPHERD DECLINED to take a position on the subway issue, saying: "That decision has been made. It's up for public hearings."

He referred to the SEMTA board's 10-5 decision April 3 to build the Woodward light rail line underground from downtown Detroit to Grand Boulevard and elevate it to McNichols.

That decision was less than popular with Oakland County's three SEMTA board members. Bianco and Henry M. Hogan Jr. voted against it. R.J. Alexander supported it only to get some kind of program moving.

Although Shepherd declined to "knock" Bianco, it is significant that he announced his candidacy for the SEMTA post many weeks before Bianco bowed out.

SHEPHERD has been mayor of Oak Park since 1971. In private life, he is president of Baran Productions, an advertising agency which he owns, and in



HOMER CASE

Late entry

the last year published a weekly paper in Oak Park that is now defunct.

He has been chairman of SEMCOG for the past two years. There is a tradi-

tion, but no rule, of a two-year limit on SEMCOG chairpersons.

Shepherd was chairman of SEMCOG's Council on Regional Development when the outlines of the 1990 transit plan were adopted.

He has been on the boards of the Michigan Municipal League, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Regional Councils, whose 1978 convention will be in Detroit.

UNDER A QUIRK in the 1975 revision of the SEMTA enabling law, Oakland County puts two persons on the SEMTA board through a process used nowhere else.

A meeting of representatives from all local governments is called, and that group nominates three persons. SEMCOG's General Assembly then picks from among the three. In such a process, a foe of regionalism such as Mrs. Schoenholz has virtually no chance of winning.

In contrast, Detroit's five members are picked by the mayor; suburban Wayne County's three members are picked by suburban county commissioners and confirmed by the full board; and Macomb County's two members are picked by the county board.

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