

Suburban reps' rebuff threatens Detroit subway:

By TOM LONERGAN

A substantial majority of state representatives from south Oakland and western Wayne counties say they'll oppose initial state funding of SEMTA's proposed Woodward Avenue subway and surface light rail system.

And some legislators say Detroit and Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) officials may have to reduce the length of the proposed downtown to McNichols (Six Mile) Road subway in order to obtain preliminary funding for SEMTA's 1990 regional transportation plan.

EIGHT OF 12 legislators interviewed late last week said they would remain solid "no" votes against funding an engineering study for the light rail system, which is proposed to run on surface from McNichols to 10 Mile Road in Royal Oak.

State Rep. Joseph Forbes, D-Oak Park, whose district includes part of Southfield, and Rep. Thomas Brown, D-Westland, said they favor the subway study.

Rep. Alice Tomboulis, D-Oakland Township, said she's uncommitted.

Rep. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield, could not be reached for

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comment but has been a strong subway opponent.

At issue is nearly \$1 million in state funds which would be part of a state and federally financed engineering study of the proposed subway system.

SEMTA can't apply for a \$16 million federal grant for the study until the

state approves its share. The total state share is an estimated \$4 million.

SEMTA General Manager Larry Salci said the subway study is "eight or 10" votes short of the 55 needed to pass. The measure barely passed the Michigan Senate last month with the required 20 votes.

"No question we have a problem right in our own back yard," Salci said referring to the strong suburban opposition. Many legislators believe the engineering study vote to be their last chance to defeat the subway, a priority of Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

"IT'S NOT the suburbs versus Detroit," said Forbes. "It's the suburbs versus Coleman Young. That's unfortunate." The issue has been pending before the House for nearly three weeks.

Rep. Roy Smith, R-Saline, a subway opponent, says he won't compromise but predicted the system as proposed

by SEMTA will pass.

"They'll get the votes," Smith said of subway proponents. "What will they have to pay? Maybe projects in other representatives' districts to get it, but they'll get it."

"They're doing a little horse trading. That's the governmental process."

But Republican Jack Kirksey of Livonia says SEMTA may have backed itself into a corner with the subway and may have to compromise.

"SEMTA got locked in on whatever they decided politically had to have

(Continued on Page 5A)

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