

Transit proposals stay on Oakland ballot

By TOM LONERGAN

Oakland County commissioners last week refused to erase four public transportation advisory questions from the Nov. 4 election ballot.

The non-binding referendums will ask voters if they want to be taxed for the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority's (SEMTA) regional transportation system (including the proposed Woodward Avenue subway/surface rail line), and if the county should withdraw from SEMTA and begin its own public transit system.

THE LEAGUE of Women Voters of the Detroit Metropolitan Area, backed by the county Board of Commissioners Democratic Caucus, pushed for removal of the ballot questions at last Thursday's board meeting. The referendums narrowly survived on a 12-11 vote.

Republicans voting to keep the SEMTA issues on the ballot included Commissioners G. William Caddell of Walled Lake, Henry Hoot of Troy, John McDonald of Farmington Hills, Lillian Moffitt of Birmingham, Joseph Montante of Orchard Lake, Ralph Moxley of Birmingham and John Peterson of Rochester.

Commissioner Paul Kasper, R-Bloomfield Hills, was absent. Robert Page, R-Birmingham, and Dennis Murphy, R-Novi, didn't vote.

Ten board Democrats, including Southfield Commissioners Lawrence Pernick and Alexander Perinoff, joined Republican Robert Gorsline of Milford in favoring removal of the ballot questions.

THE METROPOLITAN area league, in a letter to commissioners, called the SEMTA referendums, "premature, divisive and a disservice" to county residents.

"To place transportation questions on the ballot, before you and the voters of Oakland County know the results of the (regional transportation plan's) preliminary engineering studies, is deceptive, premature, expensive and ignores the advice of your legal counsel against such action."

In May, the board voted 14-8, with three abstentions, to put the advisory questions on the ballot, despite an opinion from the county's chief lawyer, Robert Allen, that it lacked authority to do so.

A lawsuit challenging the advisory referendums, predicted by several board Democrats in May, was never brought, however. The deadline for printing the Nov. 4 ballot is Sept. 16.

THE SUBWAY portion of SEMTA's \$1.5 billion regional transportation plan has made the seven-county regional transportation authority the county board's most volatile political issue for several years.

The advisory questions will appear on the same ballot as elections for county commissioners and countywide offices.

Republican Commissioners Peterson of Rochester and Anne Hobart of Waterford Township have pushed the advisory ballot questions since earlier this year when the Michigan Legislature approved, after a month-long debate, preliminary engineering funding for SEMTA's plan.

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UAW's Morris MESC choice

Kenneth Morris, of Troy, a regional director for the United Auto Workers, was recently appointed to fill a vacancy on the Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC).

The appointment, by Gov. William Milliken, is subject to State Senate confirmation.

Morris would succeed the late Alexander Fuller, of Detroit, for the remainder of a term expiring in early January.

Morris has been director of UAW Region 1-B, headquartered in Madison Heights, since 1955.

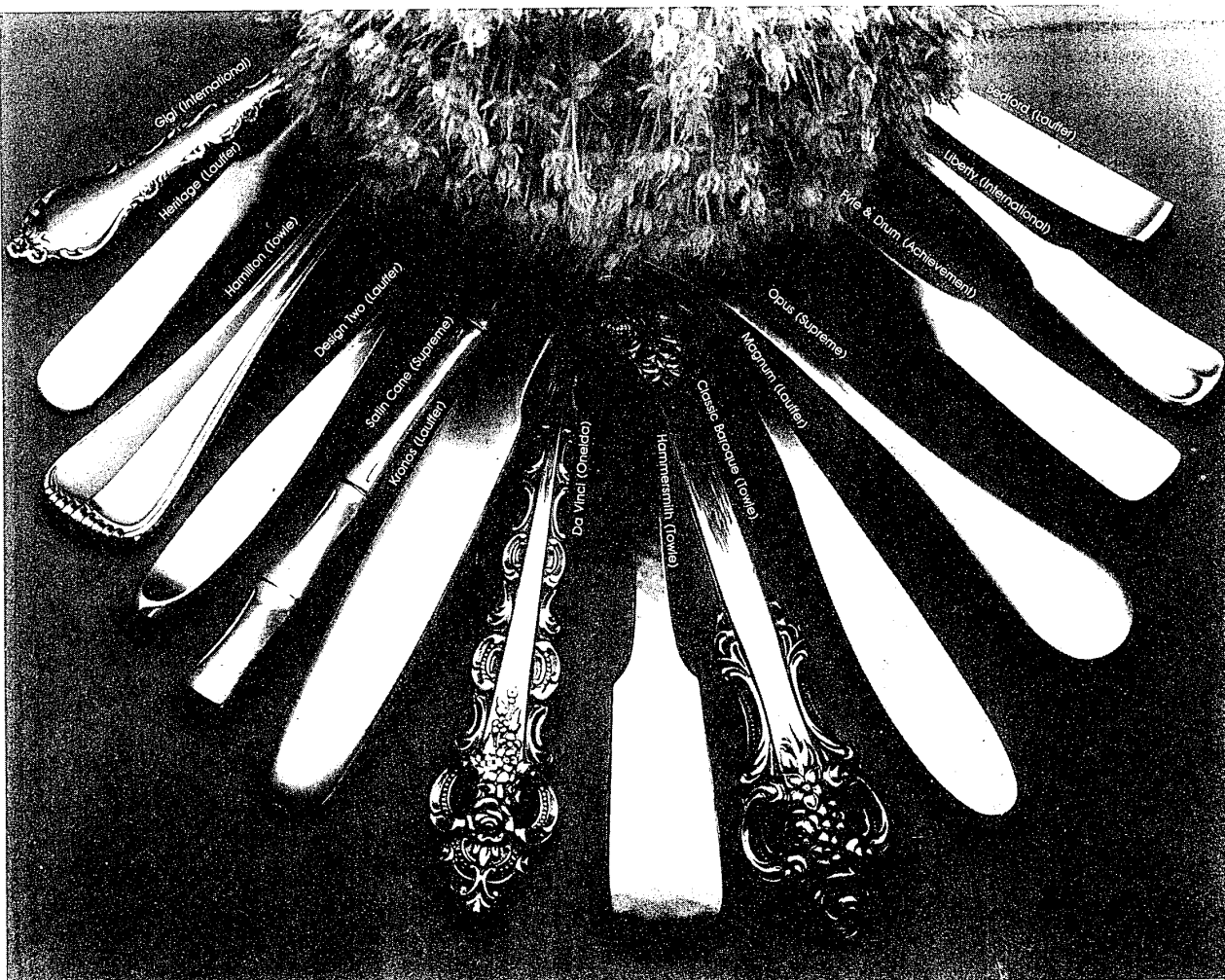
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