## **SEMTA urged** to step in, settle small bus strike

Spokesmen for 1,200 riderless senior citizens and handicapped persons want the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority to take a more "visible" role in settling four-month-long small bus strike in suburban Wayne and Oak-

The strike is against Transit Management Inc., which operates the small bus service under contract with SEM-TA. SEMTA officials have not been involved in negotiations, said Michael Dewey, the authority's small bus systems manager.

Dewey, the authority's small bus sys-tems manager.

The strike, which began in early Oc-tober, has shut down SEMTA's OCART and WAYCART systems. The two small bus systems carried mostly elderly and handicapped people to work, recreation centers, grocery shopping and other ap-

pointments.
Dial-A-Ride systems in the suburbs have not been effected.
On strike are 105 drivers and clerks represented by Teamsters Local 247.

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"MANY SENIORS were totally dependent on OCART," said Ellen Biernes, a senior volunteer coordinator for the city of Southfield. She was among a group of five who asked the SEMTA board Tuesday to take a more active role in settling the strike. The two sides have not met since late January when a near settlement "fell through on us," said Ron Barnes, general manager of Transit Management of Wayne and Oskland County.

David Schuler, the Teamsters negotiator, said her retused to take a proposed contract to a membership vote late last nonth because management had ommitted or changed some items.

Barnes said "hats not the case," but both desing the proposed to provide details.

THE SERIAT board discussed the ap-

THE SEMTA board discussed the ap-arent stalemate in a closed session

parent stalemate in a closed session Tuesday.

A SEMTA advisory group called the Regional Elderly & Handicapped Ser-

vice Development Committee asked the board to consider seeking a court injunction to provide service while negotiations continue. It also asked the SEMTA board to develop other plans to operate the small buses should the strike continue past July 1 when SEMTA board to develop other plans to operate the small buses should the strike continue past July 1 when SEMTA for current contract with Transit Management expires.

A SEMTA official said both actions would probably be illegal.

The group urged the SEMTA board to "become more urgently and visibly involved" to settle the strike. "In this regard," the group said in a written statement, "we've noted that the SEMTA updates don't even mention the strike, all the while noting the new buses obtained to bring the fleet to full size. Farted buses nonetheless."

THE STRIKING drivers and clerks were paid roughly \$4.35 an hour, with overtime, based on a 47-hour work week.

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Transit Management is offering a raise to \$5.80 an hour immediately, with two additional raises to \$6.80 per hour by Janoury 1983.

Barnes remains optimistic about a settlement. "If it's just language that's the problem we come to be a settlement. "If it's just language that's the problem we come to be a settlement. "If it's just language that's the problem we have been a settlement with a settlement and the welcomes the SEM-TA board's becoming involved in the fispute. "They're the ones that fund the program," he said. "Transit Management works for them."

He said only "a few" of the 100 strikers, who are receiving Teamster strike benefits, have left for other jobs.

The OCART and WAYCART shutdowns have saved SEMTA "several hundred thousand," according to Dewey. He said the money has not been transferred to other programs.

OCART has a \$2.9 million operating budget for the fiscal year ending June 30. WAYCART was budgeted at \$3.2 million, Dewey said.

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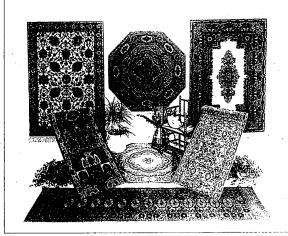
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