

Quit SEMTA?

County may want study of implications first

By Mike Scanlon
staff writer

Oakland County will have to give some answers before it can ask any questions about quitting SEMTA.

County officials' two big questions about dropping out of the seven-county Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority are what it will cost to go it alone, and who pays for it if they do. But the answer is, "nobody knows," until the county decides what sort of one-county transit system it wants.

A BOARD of commissioners subcommittee debated Monday whether to order a study of the effects of quitting SEMTA. The committee finally decided to first read a five-month, 1979 study on the same issue — ordered for largely the same reasons — before making up its mind on the latest pull-out drive.

The full board of commissioners split along party lines two weeks ago in approving a resolution to drop out of SEMTA if any "subway vestige" remains in the regional group's final

transportation plan. The board also ordered a report on what it would cost to run an Oakland-only transit system, and whether federal and state aid could be used to subsidize a one-county system.

But Andrew Dudash, an associate planner in county Executive Daniel Murphy's office, told the board that until it makes "major and basic policy decisions . . . doing a study and coming up with the answers can't really be done."

Dudash added it's "highly questionable" that an Oakland-only system could be set up at all in 1981.

THE QUESTIONS involved in splitting from SEMTA are varied. • What happens to SEMTA's \$600 million in pending federal aid? It's unclear whether Oakland County would be in line for a slice of the pie.

• What happens to Oakland County residents who commute to jobs downtown? If Oakland County creates its own transit authority, it can't operate in another authority's area and wouldn't be legally able to get riders to

Among questions raised by Oakland's possible withdrawal from SEMTA are: What happens to SEMTA's \$600 million in pending federal aid? What happens to Oakland County residents who commute to jobs downtown? How much federal aid would the county get?

Detroit. The county could contract with SEMTA to provide services, but what SEMTA would charge for the services — and even whether it would agree to provide them — are uncertain.

• If Oakland County withdraws, it loses all its seats on the SEMTA governing board and won't have anything to say about how the much-larger SEMTA system would develop in future years.

• There's also the seemingly unimportant issue of whether a one-county system could be set up as an "authority," like SEMTA, or whether it would

have to settle for being an "agency." Authorities get state money from special gas taxes and license fees. Agencies do not get that money.

• How much federal transit aid would the county get?

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Tax workshop in B'ham

Tax advice for persons who have recently opened a small business is available from the Internal Revenue Service at a July 21 workshop in Birmingham.

The six-hour session includes discussions on federal income tax withholding requirements, other federal employment taxes, proper record-keeping, filing requirements for federal business tax returns and features of the IRS assistance program available to small business persons. The workshop will be from 9 a.m.

to 3 p.m. in room 212 at the Birmingham Center for Continuing Education, 746 Fourth. To register, call toll free 1-800-462-8839, ext. 3674 and ask for Helen Madro, tax education coordinator.

Workshops for small business owners are conducted by the IRS as part of its year-round program of assistance for small business taxpayers. The workshops are supplemented by other services including tax counseling and free publications covering tax-related topics.

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