

# Oakland GOP is wary of new SEMTA plan

By Carol Azizian  
staff writer

A revised regional transit plan, with more suburban bus service and less subway, is receiving a cool reception from Republican Oakland County commissioners.

The board's Planning and Building Committee, on a 6-4 party-line vote, decided to hold off prompt approval of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority's new \$1.6 billion proposal.

The six Republicans favored more study and postponed action until the panel's March 24 meeting. One even proposed hiring consultants, and another suspected the plan would "short-change" Oakland County.

Democrats, however, saw the 1983 plan as "an improvement" over the 1979 version.

THE COMMITTEE'S delay may put SEMTA officials in a bind.

SEMTA faces a March 31 deadline to receive a share of the new federal public transit money, which would cover most of the rail construction costs.

"If all four jurisdictions (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb counties and Detroit) don't support it, there's no sense going to Washington," said SEMTA Board Chairman DeWitt Henry.

Public transit revenues will come from the five-cent per gallon gasoline tax, which takes effect April 1.

"There are a lot of other transportation authorities down there and they're way ahead of us," Henry added. "If we don't get to Washington soon, we can forget about any major expansion for the next few years."

SEMTA officials said they tried to make the plan more attractive to suburban leaders by designing a shorter subway route in Detroit and longer bus routes in the suburbs.

"The first plan (proposed in 1979) didn't gain the support necessary for implementation," Henry said. "We're here to try and iron out differences."

BUT COMMISSIONER George B. Jackson, R-

**'We've been kicking this thing around for so many years. Millions of dollars have been spent in studies. We should take the bull by the horns and make a decision.'**

— Commissioner Alexander Perinoff,

Birmingham, said he wouldn't support a proposal which includes a subway.

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"I can't support the sub-surface light rail, and my constituents won't support it," he said. Jackson argued that Wayne County and Detroit would wind up getting better services. "We've been short-changed all along and there's no guarantee it won't happen again."

Commissioner Lillian Moffitt, R-Bloomfield Township, proposed spending up to \$2,000 to hire a consultant to review the plan. But the panel turned down her suggestion.

COMMISSIONER Alexander Perinoff, D-Southfield, disagreed with Republicans, saying the new proposal was "an improvement over the one proposed four years ago."

"We've been kicking this thing around for so many years," Perinoff said. "Millions of dollars have been spent in studies. We should take the bull by the horns and make a decision."

Perinoff accused fellow commissioners of dragging out a long and unnecessary city-suburb fight. "I'm disturbed at the deep-seated parochialism here," Perinoff said. "We should stop referring to Detroit and Wayne County as if they were Communists and Viet Cong."

"Somewhere down the line we have to trust somebody," he added. "We should work together to pass this important proposition."

THE NEW PROPOSAL cuts in half the underground portion of the rapid transit rail route.

It calls for a subway running along Woodward from the riverfront to West Grand Boulevard. The route would continue above ground to Eight Mile Road and at ground level from Eight Mile to Pontiac.

The previous plan called for the light rail line to run underground from Jefferson to Six Mile. The train would travel at ground level from Six Mile to 11 Mile in Royal Oak. The cost of this plan was estimated at \$1.2 billion.

THE NEW plan also calls for:

- Doubling suburban bus service, with more emphasis on east-west routes in Oakland and Macomb counties.

- Establishing "transit centers" where riders can park their cars and transfer to small and large buses. In Oakland County, the centers could be located in Novi, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Royal Oak, Troy, Birmingham, Rochester/Avon, Pontiac/Waterford and West Bloomfield.



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