

SEMTA slashes due Monday

By Kathy Parriah
staff writer

Despite a last ditch effort to save bus and train service, the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) is rolling along with planned cuts.

After a two-week delay, SEMTA's board of directors Tuesday merely received and filed a report from a subcommittee set up to find ways of reducing the impact on unhappy patrons.

So SEMTA staffers are proceeding to and the commuter rail, reduce buses and routes and raise youth fares. All changes, designed to eliminate a projected \$18 million operating deficit, will take place next Monday.

"We reached the consensus that neither the governor nor the legislature is going to help us before Oct. 17. And the same for the federal government," explained director Thomas Fegan, who chaired the five-person subcommittee.

"And there are no substantial dollars available from any other source."

THE GROUP agreed that bus priorities should be line haul, suburban cross-town routes and then small buses.

But it could not recommend action on the train, which runs from Pontiac

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to Detroit. "We could not reach a consensus on the issue," Fegan told the directors.

Outlining his own investigations, SEMTA General Manager Gary W. Krause said he contacted several cities about helping pay train costs.

He said Pontiac promised to aid in snow removal, Bloomfield Township and Royal Oak showed interest, and there was a possibility of using unpaid community service workers in Oakland County.

Detroit pledged to re-address the issue of increasing the speed limit for the train, he added.

BUT THE MAJOR consideration, Krause believes, is the cost of labor. He offered to talk with Grand Trunk and Western Railroad about union concessions on rules like crew size.

"The time for the pat on the back and psychological support is over," the general manager said.

"Either it's a commitment or no train."

SEMTA staffers said that even with help from communities, "very basic" train service would cost \$1 million a year. But for several directors, there seemed to be no alternative.

"I regard train service as an Oakland County service," said Michael

Einheuser of Detroit. "I'll agree only if that money comes out of linehaul and small buses slated for Oakland County."

For Macomb County's Diana Kolakowski, there are too few train riders to justify saving the service. "I'm concerned how I could justify that when we're eliminating bus service which costs less and serves that many people."

"I'm torn between my heart and mind," explained Oakland director R.J. Alexander of Birmingham. "It's a disaster to discontinue rail service and ever expect to have light rail. But I'm also concerned about the cost of keeping the train running for another six months."

WHILE STICKING with their planned service reductions, the SEMTA board patiently listened to another presentation from the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers.

Wearing red, white and blue "Save the Train" tags, the group members attended both last month's public hearing and special board meeting.

"We need more people like you who don't just sit at home crying about loss of service, but who speak out," said Henry. "And I hope you continue to speak out."

Cars, vans on block at Oakland auction

Oakland County has scheduled a public auction of surplus vehicles and equipment at 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, in the central garage yard in the county service center complex, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

About 40 cars and trucks from county departments will be included. Eighteen Chevrolet Impalas, several Pontiac Sunbirds and other models will be on

the block. Bids can also be made on pickup trucks and vans from 1977-79 and a wrecker.

Office equipment such as typewriters, desks, chairs and supplies will be sold. Power grounds and lawn equipment, cameras, video and audio items will be listed.

The public may inspect vehicles on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 13 and 14.

All other items can be inspected 8-10 a.m. the day of the sale.

The auction will start with the sale of unclaimed recovered stolen property

held by the sheriff's department.

Lists of items to be auctioned are available from the Oakland County Purchasing Division.

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