

Lawmakers have hopes for new transit authority

By Tim Richard,
staff writer

Legislative leaders are hoping for agreement early this year on a bill to decentralize the public transportation authority in southeastern Michigan and give it a chance to win voter tax support.

"We're trying to move it before the Easter recess so it doesn't get bogged down in the election year," said state Sen. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield.

Fessler is author of Senate Bill 363, which would abolish the seven-county Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) and replace it with a tri-county agency. Fessler's bill would give the new Regional Transit Commission authority to ask voters for a property tax to subsidize operations. The new RTC would leave intact the Detroit Department of Transportation (D-DOT), which was supposed to be ab-

sorbed by SEMTA under a 1976 law. A merger couldn't be negotiated because SEMTA lacked the funding source to guarantee Detroit Mayor Coleman Young that service in the city wouldn't be reduced.

FESSLER'S BILL passed the Senate easily in spring of 1985, but has been bogged down in the House — first in the Transportation Committee, then in Appropriations, with the Transportation Committee asking for a second shot at it.

Fessler, as chairman of the Senate committee handling transit, said several meetings have been scheduled between his staff, the House staff and the "Big Four" which would run the RTC — Young, Wayne County Executive William Lucas, Oakland Executive Daniel J. Murphy and Macomb County Board Chairman Walter Frankuch.

In a significant move, the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce last month endorsed the Fessler bill, with

some amendments. The significance is that the chairman of the chamber's transportation committee is William A. Cilluffo, former administrative aide to Mayor Young and former SEMTA board member by Young's appointment. Cilluffo now is marketing director for the Automobile Club of Michigan, a group which historically has sometimes been cool to public transit. The chamber's statement of support for SB 363 was largely in Cilluffo's words.

BUT WHILE Cilluffo and the chamber like the idea of the Big Four setting policy for the RTC, Fessler still is cool to that idea.

"I'm still going to push for four elected transportation commissioners," he said. "They would be more interested in transportation. It would be their primary goal. They would want a system that's viable — one they could support when they go out and talk to the public."

The current SEMTA board has 15 members — four appointed by the mayor of Detroit, four by the Wayne County executive, three from Oakland County by various procedures, and two by the Macomb County board. Two others are appointed by other procedures to represent the outlying counties.

"The chamber firmly believes a complete restructuring as proposed in SB 363 is needed," said Cilluffo, who is also chairman of the chamber's metropolitan transportation committee.

"The Big Four would comprise the board of the new governing body and would therefore be accountable to the public," said Cilluffo. "They are very positive about the proposal."

THE CHAMBER, however, is proposing several amendments, Cilluffo said. Among them:

1) The bill should more clearly identify authorities designated to receive federal and state funding. "What we're trying to avoid by having designated

recipients is the type of squabbling that's occurred in the past between SEMTA and the city," he said.

2) The bill should provide that either an income tax or a property tax be levied on a regionwide basis. At present, it provides only a property tax. "The size, type and duration of the levy should be

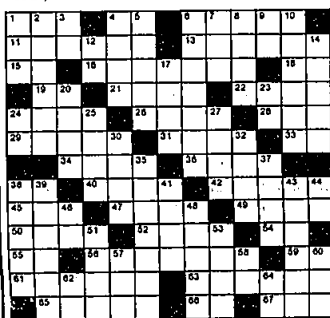
left with the electorate, not the Legislature," said Cilluffo.

3) The bill should not restrict the service area of D-DOT to the city limits of Detroit. "We don't think that ought to be a legislative mandate. Those decisions ought to be made by the new policy board," he said.

CROSSWORD PUZZLER

ACROSS

- 1 Imbibe
- 4 That man
- 8 Once more
- 11 Passage through mountain
- 13 Dashed off
- 15 Teutonic
- 16 Egg dishes
- 18 Change
- 19 Father
- 21 Highlander
- 22 Proposition
- 24 Partner
- 25 Small children
- 26 Addition on house
- 29 Appointments
- 31 Liquefy
- 33 Spanish article
- 34 Spanish pot
- 36 Expires



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Answer to Previous Puzzle

SPARE PARTS
PARROW HAT
ARE LABORERS
RA SIRE EA TB
LLAMA PAGAN
CLEAN TAP TED
HEAR AAR MORE
ILK ALB RINSE
ME TIER VILE
ARIA LESTALIA
CIRCUMSTANCES
ENTIE SEA OTTO

DOWN

- 38 French: abbr.
- 40 Placid
- 42 Equus
- 45 Limb
- 47 Face of watch
- 49 Average
- 50 Majors
- 52 Century plant
- 54 Displaced person: abbr.
- 55 Negative prefix
- 56 Freedom
- 58 Maiden loved by Zeus
- 61 Recollect
- 63 Chaperon
- 65 Article of furniture
- 66 Yes Sp.
- 67 Damp
- 4 Dress borders
- 5 Choose
- 6 Encouraged
- 7 Obtained
- 8 In addition
- 9 That thing
- 10 Irritate
- 12 Japanese drama
- 14 Laughable
- 17 Weaving machine
- 20 Choir voice
- 23 Compass point
- 24 Forenoon
- 25 Shout
- 27 Scion
- 30 Skidded
- 32 Abound
- 35 Good-natured
- 37 Sow
- 38 Altitude
- 39 Rue
- 41 Wan
- 43 Plunder
- 44 Tin symbol
- 46 Earth goddess
- 48 Noblemen
- 51 Thick slice
- 53 Case for small articles
- 57 Sick
- 58 Old pronoun
- 60 Grain
- 62 Calcium symbol
- 64 Compass point

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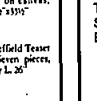
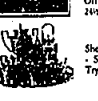
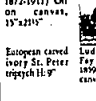
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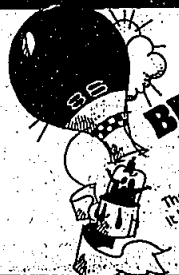
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