

# Oakland to planners: more east-west buses

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Oakland County officials say public transit planners are barely looking at their needs: east-west, suburb-to-suburb buses.

"From the comments I've heard, east-west service is sorely lacking," said county commissioner Marilyn E. Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills.

"I support Ms. Gosling's concern," said Auburn Hills councilman E. Dale Fisk.

They commented Monday night on the new, 20-year "Regional Public Transportation Choices," a plan drafted by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

A BARE two dozen people attended the hearing in the County Commissioners' auditorium in Pontiac, and many of those were SEMCOG staffers.

"John Amberger, SEMCOG executive director, outlined floor plan 'choices' (see outline below) to serve the region until the year 2005. Federal law requires a regional transportation plan as a condition of receiving highway and transit grants."

"But only one choice — the all-bus program — listed 76 cross-town suburban express buses, which is what Gosling and Fisk wanted to see. Three plans with varying degrees of Detroit-suburban light rail line omit-

ted cross-town express buses.

They did, however, list varying levels of cross-town local service, noted Carmine Palumbo, SEMCOG transportation planner.

The answer failed to satisfy the Oakland officials. For years, they and other county politicians have argued there is greater need for service across the Macomb County line than to downtown Detroit.

Fannie Adams, representing the Oakland-Livingston Human Services Agency, said, "We really need small buses for senior citizens and people in isolated areas. As people grow older, you have less cars."

SEMCOG PLANS 2, 3 and 4 provided for growing degrees of light rail transit — a modern version of the streetcar — in the Woodward corridor.

"We've had commuter service from Pontiac to Detroit before," said county commissioner David Moffitt, R-Bloomfield Township, noting the service collapsed. "Why do you think it's viable now?"

Robert Newhouse, SEMCOG staff member, said the previous service, along Grand Trunk Railroad tracks, bypassed the major service areas along Woodward such as Wayne State University, the medical area and the cultural center, following back paths to the Renaissance Center.

"Much of this light rail line direct-

ly penetrates Woodward," he said. The SEMCOG plan calls for a subway from Ren Cen to Grand Circus Park in downtown Detroit and a surface route to Royal Oak and/or Pontiac.

Generally, SEMCOG staffers said, as use of rail increases, operating costs per passenger decrease. One light rail car can carry the equivalent of 2.5 buses, 12 vans and 90 cars.

ALBERT MARTIN, general manager of SEMTA, the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, called for an increased sales tax to pay for the increased service.

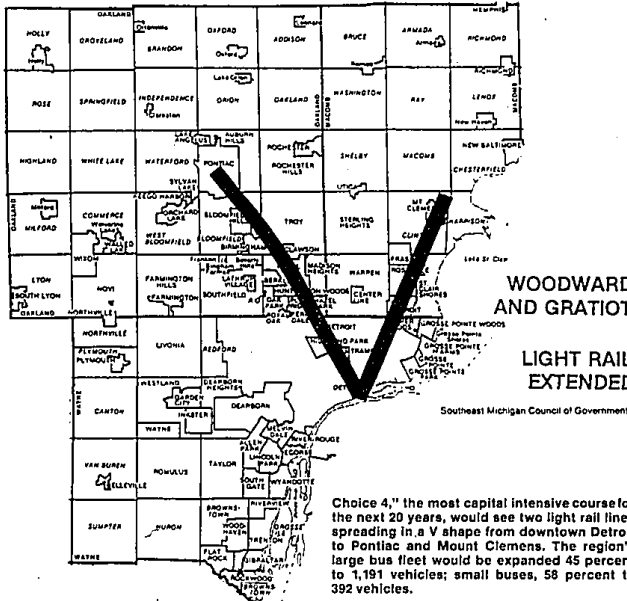
"Around the country, the sales tax is usually the most viable for transit funding," said Martin, who heads the seven-county public bus agency. "The SEMTA board in 1984 picked the sales tax as most viable."

"We happen to be a tremendous tourist area," said Martin, indicating tourist dollars could be tapped to help pay transit costs.

For the last year, however, state legislators have debated rival school-finance reform plans, all of which have included replacing property taxes with a 2-cent hike in the current 4-cent sales tax.

Said SEMCOG's Amberger: "There's sort of a race on to see who gets the sales tax first — schools or transit."

SEMCOG is the seven-county region's planning agency. Its 130-plus members pay dues voluntarily. SEMTA is an operating authority whose jurisdiction is outside the city of Detroit.



Choice 4," the most capital intensive course for the next 20 years, would see two light rail lines spreading in a V shape from downtown Detroit to Pontiac and Mount Clemens. The region's large bus fleet would be expanded 45 percent to 1,191 vehicles; small buses, 58 percent to 392 vehicles.

## The choices: bus, light rail

Here are the four "public transportation choices," as outlined in SEMCOG's 20-year master plan:

Choice 1: Bus Increase only. Increase large bus fleet 61 percent, from 822 to 1,329. Add 76 cross-town express buses in suburbs (e.g., Southfield, Troy, Plymouth-Dearborn). Increase small buses 50 percent. Annual capital cost and operating deficit: \$158 million.

Choice 2: Add Woodward light rail. Increase large bus fleet only 52 percent and add 34-car light line on Woodward from downtown Detroit to Royal Oak. No cross-town express

buses. Annual capital cost and operating deficit: \$172 million.

Choice 3: Similar, add Gratiot light rail. SEMTA's own "preferred plan" would add 18 light rail cars that would serve Gratiot from downtown to 149th in Roseville. Not as many new big buses. No cross-town express buses. Annual capital cost and operating deficit: \$183 million.

Choice 4: Similar, extend both light rails. The Woodward line would go to Pontiac, the Gratiot line to Mount Clemens, with a total of 84 light rail cars. Not as many big buses. No cross-town express buses. Total annual capital and operating subsidy cost: \$194 million.

## Pernicks win an appointment

For once, commissioner Larry Pernick of Southfield wasn't sore at the Republican majority on the Oakland County board.

It wasn't just because the board picked a Democrat for a three-year term on the Community Mental Health Board.

The Democrat happened to be his son, Nat Pernick, with University of Michigan degrees in medicine (1983) and law (1986).

The elder Pernick, a veteran of two decades on the county board, was positively beaming as the appointment sailed through 24-0 last week.

The doctor-attorney Pernick has an office on Telegraph Road in Bloomfield Township where he specializes in mental health law (commitments and guardianships), computer-related law, and evaluations of medical malpractice cases for attorneys.

He is active in the American Lung Association of Southeast Michigan, East Michigan Environmental Action Council, Jewish Community Council and Optimists Club.



Dr. Nat Pernick on mental health board

THE BOARD voted 21-3 to hire the law firm of Dickinson, Wright, Moon Van Dusen & Freeman to defend its decision to place a solid waste incinerator in Pontiac.

The city of Pontiac has filed suit asking a permanent Circuit Court injunction against the incinerator, part of Oakland's state-mandated solid waste management plan.

Dismissing were three of the board's eight Democrats — Hubert Price of Pontiac, James Doyon of Madison Heights and Ruel McPherson of Hazel Park.

A BILL regulating "dangerous animals" was endorsed unanimously by the county board.

House Bill 4597, sponsored by Rep. Willis Bullard, R-Milford, isn't limited to pit bulls. That was one reason the board's general government committee reported out the recommendation.

## Six diabetes classes open

A series of six diabetes classes will be held 7-9 p.m. in the auditorium of the Oakland County Health Division, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

Classes begin on Thursday, July 7. Classes are for adult diabetics and their family members. They are taught by a public health nurse and a

The bill would allow a judge to find the owner of a dangerous animal guilty of involuntary manslaughter if the animal caused the death of a person. For an injury less than death, the owner could be found guilty of a felony and sentenced to four years in prison and fined \$2,000.

SOME 280 county employees have a new three-year contract, retroactive to Jan. 1 and expiring Dec. 31, 1990.

The board ratified a contract with the Oakland County Employees Union that raised wages an overall 4.5 percent, the same as non-union employees received. The contract required a budget adjustment of \$312,000 for the current year.

Covered are drain commissioner, public works, parks and recreation, medical care, community mental health, animal control and some sheriff's employees.

registered dietitian. Topics include the nature of the disease, dietary management, medications and suggestions for coping with everyday problems.

No fees are charged, but you are asked to preregister by calling 424-7042.

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