

SMART seeks U.S. cash for aging buses



Patrick Nowak (left), SMART chairman, 'has good standing with President Bush's Administration,' said general manager Albert Martin, adding, 'I used to get beaten up.'

By Tim Richard
staff writer

SMART, the new suburban transit system, will seek \$5 million from the federal government to replace some of the fleet's aging buses.

"Monies were diverted from line buses to the (downtown Detroit) People Mover. The average years left went down from eight years to two years," said Ben Glanpetroni, a Macomb County staff member.

Glanpetroni, SMART board chairman Patrick Nowak and general manager Albert Martin told Oakland County's general government committee last week how cost overruns on the People Mover not only drained capital from the suburban system but gave the region a bad name in Washington.

SMART, BY state law, is the suc-

cessor of SEMTA, the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

As the officials told it, SEMTA budgeted the People Mover, a 2.7 mile elevated electric car line circling Detroit's downtown, at \$137 million. "It came in at \$200 million," said Martin, who became SEMTA's general manager late in that period.

"SEMTA had to commit the capital costs. We were prohibited from even applying (to Washington) for capital funds (for buses) in 1982-3-4-5."

Eventually, SEMTA turned over the People Mover project to the city of Detroit.

Last year the Michigan Legislature dissolved SEMTA, created a small umbrella agency called the Regional Transit Commission, and left Detroit to run its system and SMART to run suburban buses.

DESCRIBING how federal Urban Mass Transit Authority (UMTA) officials greeted him, Martin said, "I used to get beaten up."

But he said SMART chairman Nowak, a deputy Oakland County executive and active Republican, "has good standing with President Bush's Administration."

"I'm optimistic. Until we put a different face on our governing board, we couldn't get anywhere with the administration. Now there are some real possibilities."

Nowak saw no major revenue increases on the horizon. "Bush will tighten even more than Reagan. And there will be no big expansion of state funding."

Nowak said the new SMART board, which took over last month, "wring out \$2 million from administration expenses" to use on bus service.

Glanpetroni added the SMART board will not ask taxpayers for new money "until it satisfies itself it has made the most effective use of the present money."

SEMTA WAS an umbrella agency for the seven-county region, receiv-

ing \$90 million in federal operating grants. It kept \$31 million to run suburban buses and service to downtown Detroit and passed the rest on to the city of Detroit.

SMART, which stands for Suburban Mobility Authority Rapid Transit, has a fleet of 200 buses. Because of the recession and federal aid cuts, Glanpetroni said, the suburbs saw bus service scaled back 50 percent in 1982-3.

But the suburbs need bus service, he went on. During the 1980s, daily work trips have declined from western Wayne County to Detroit and from Macomb County to Detroit, but they have increased within Oakland County, within western Wayne County, within Macomb County and between Macomb and Oakland counties.

Meanwhile, in the economic recovery of the last six years, the suburbs have gained 527,000 jobs — 231,000 in Oakland, 126,500 in suburban Wayne and 126,500 in Macomb.

Racist deeds are legal dead wood

(AP) — Property deeds discriminating against minorities may be offensive but will stay on the books in Michigan because they're non-binding and too difficult to remove, officials say.

Jack Hays, corporation counsel for Oakland County, says deed restrictions are meaningless because of the 1968 U.S. Fair Housing law and other federal and state laws.

"They have no force, so there's no sense in anybody getting those things removed," said Lynn Allen, Oakland County's clerk and registrar of deeds. "You have to go to court. It's a pain. You have to get the signatures of everybody in the plat. It gets quite cumbersome."

"They used to have quite a few restrictions, such as race, religion and so forth. But since the passing of various laws, those are null and void. The only restrictions you find on newer plats might be something that says no fences or no garages that aren't attached to the house," he said.

JAMES HORN, spokesman for Michigan's Department of Civil Rights, said, "I'm sure, with the federal regulations out there as well, those deed restrictions are better off left dead than to try to enforce (them). I'm wondering why the counties haven't gone through the books and cleaned up laws to the law of the land?"

"Basically, the complaints we get in housing are filed in renting on the basis of marital status, children or race."

A section of 1946 deed restrictions for Rolling Acres in Oakland County says: "None of the said lots . . . shall be used or occupied by any person . . . other than the caucasian race, except servants of other races may be employed as such."

"I was shocked," said Lori Cholo, a White Lake Township resident who learned of the restriction when she became secretary of the 100-home Rolling Acres Beach Association last year. "My mother-in-law lived here for 40 years and she didn't even realize it was there."



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Rob Sweetgall
walkers' guru

Top walker due at Beaumont

Rob Sweetgall, author and fitness advocate, will bring his message to the area Saturday, March 18, in a program sponsored by the Community Health Education department at William Beaumont Hospital.

To attend, register by March 10 by calling Beaumont's Community Health Education department at 258-3758. The hospital is at 3601 13 Mile (west of Woodward), Royal Oak.

Sweetgall will discuss walking and weight control 1-3 p.m. in the auditorium of Beaumont's Corporate Services Building. Admission is free and open to the public.

Sweetgall will also speak in conjunction with Beaumont's annual cardiac patient breakfast and awards ceremony, to be held earlier that day.

"Rob Sweetgall is the founder and dean of fitness walking in this coun-

try," said Dave Parkinson, manager of the Community Health Education department. "Many people hesitate to begin an exercise program because of the equipment, clothing and facilities required. Walking is something most everyone can do with little expense or training."

As founder and president of Creative Walking Inc., Sweetgall designs walking programs for schools, corporations and health care organizations.

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