

# Getting SMART means serving riders

By Dave Varga,  
staff writer

Maybe it was a rhetorical question that Patrick Nowak, deputy Oakland County executive, was asking the crowd.

Yet, none of the business leaders at a recent Oakland County Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting could tell him what SMART stood for.

As chairman of the board of that new organization — Suburban Mobility Authority — Regional Transportation — Nowak wants the direct descendant of SEMTA to be known for and operate according to its new acronym.

SMART will keep its cost increases below inflation, involve the private sector in transporting riders,

and spend any money saved to provide more services, Nowak said.

ONE OF THE FIRST actions taken by the board directing SMART was to streamline management and cut the budget 5 percent or about \$2.5 million, he said. They also set a hiring freeze and banned out-of-state travel for board members and employees.

Nowak claimed the unions had been able to "call the shots" under SEMTA. "They shouldn't be able to," he said. "We have two constituents in public transportation, the riders and the taxpayers. And those are the two we plan to serve."

One goal of the 20-year-old SEMTA (Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority) was to merge Detroit's Department of Transportation

bus service with service in the rest of Wayne County, Oakland, Macomb and four outlying counties, Nowak said.

Under the new system that began in January, there's a new Regional Transit Coordinating Council heading up two separate bus operating units — Detroit's DOT and the suburbs' SMART unit.

SMART WILL NOT change or eliminate former SEMTA routes to downtown Detroit, but new services will be added between suburbs if that's needed, Nowak said.

"In this region, we have a skeletal system of public transportation," Nowak said. "Only 10 percent of Oakland County residents have access to public transportation."

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— Patrick Nowak

In recent years, Nowak said, the county's job population has grown faster than its number of residents. And there's still a need for more

workers here, as evidenced by the number of "Help Wanted" signs. But the traffic congestion keeps potential workers away.

"People have a difficult time getting to work, particularly at entry-level wages," Nowak said.

SMART is also hoping to receive federal grant money. "If we do, that will be the first discretionary grant, the first dollars coming to this area since the people mover," Nowak said.

Nowak was filling in for his boss, executive Daniel Murphy, in speaking to members of the county chamber and co-sponsor Michigan Bell Telephone. Murphy missed the event because of routine, minor surgery. He will be back to work Monday.

## Students focus on U.S. Constitution

High school students from throughout Oakland County will merge for a "Jefferson Meeting on the Constitution" on Law Day, May 1, in Pontiac.

The Farmington Area Committee on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution and the Oakland Schools are co-sponsoring the event, supported in part by a grant from the Michigan Committee on the Bicentennial.

The Jefferson Meeting is patterned on one, last November in Lansing, that attracted 150 persons from across the state. "Participants focus on proposals to amend the U.S. Constitution, spend an in-depth day considering pros and cons, and emerge with a heightened sense of appreciation of our political strengths and heritage," said Jean Fox, Farmington Area Committee on the Bicentennial chairwoman.

Dr. David Harris of the Oakland Schools is co-chairing the event. Students who will converge on the Kiva of the Oakland Schools Building on Pontiac Lake Road will form teams, pro and con, for each of two subjects: "Mischiefs of Faction: Campaigns, Money and the Public Good," and "So Great a Power to Any Single Person: The Presidential Term and the Executive Power."



Judge Bernard Friedman  
keynote speaker

THE FIRST proposed amendment addresses reforms in campaign financing, a problem current in each national election; the second considers whether one presidential term of six years would be better than two of four years each.

Teams of two students and one adult will register from county high schools, both public and private. All three Farmington public high

schools are registered, according to Norman Dickson, head of social studies.

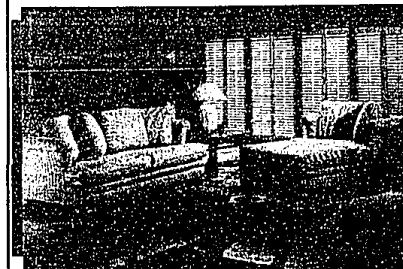
Two high school teachers, William Brinker of North Farmington and Richard Steele of Farmington Hills Harrison, will be steering committee members and serve as resource leaders for groups of students.

Federal Judge Bernard Friedman of the U.S. District Court, keynote speaker, will delineate how he sees the Constitution at work daily in his federal courtroom. Students will form issue groups in the morning to plan their arguments for the afternoon session. Following luncheon, proposed amendments will be argued.

"Debating the Constitution quickly leads you to think hard about the nature of man in society, of justice, freedom and law," said David Broder, syndicated columnist, who participated in a Jefferson Meeting in northern Virginia recently.

"The Jefferson Meeting turns into a voyage of discovery to the roots of this Republic."

"We intend to get students thinking about what the Constitution really means and how it affects them today," Dr. Harris said.



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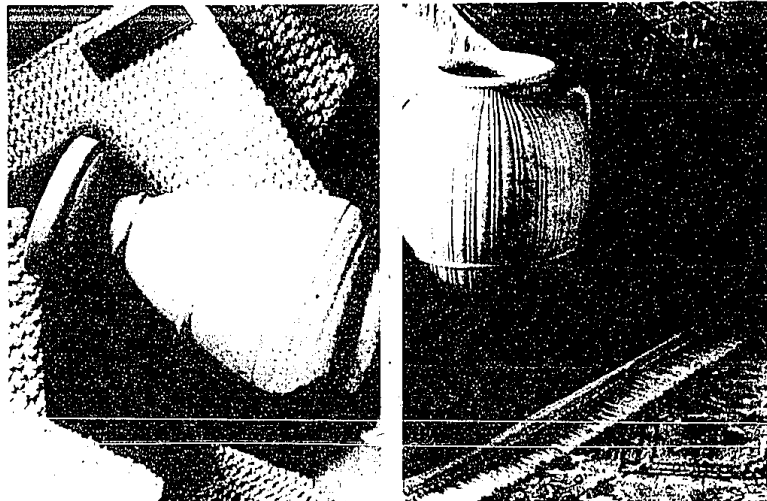
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