SMART's future rests on suburbs

SMART buses will keep running through next June, but the transit service's long term future rests with suburban taxpayers.

A short term operating plan announced last week is expected to help overcome \$7.7 million in current debt and keep the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation from adding new debt next year

Major SMART bus routes were to

Major SMART bus routes were to have snut diwen March 27 SMART's plan includes a new \$124,000 bit to flirmingham for dial-a-ride services. The city has paid \$16,000-a-year for the service under a 1970s agreement, but the fee is being caused.

Southfield's shuttle service rate will also be increased. SMART will also sell property it owns in Birmiagham, Bloomfield Hills and Detroit — most of it park-ing lots or open space. The plan also includes:

Budget cuts of \$4.3 million for 1992-93, including a wage freeze for SMART undon personnel. Next year's SMART operating budget will be cut 10 percent across-the-board.
 Additional cuts of \$17 million, to be determined in 90 days from items ranging from health care to a

Budget cuts range from large scal- \$325,524 from leaving cur-rently vacant position unfilled — to small scale — \$6,000 in eliminating

small scale — 46,000 in eliminating seminar travel and fees. EVEN MORE FAT will eventual-tions director Paul Majka. "Everything we've presented is a sale estimate." Majka sald. "I'm confident there's even more that can be saved."

e saved Despite that, SMART officials ion expect to begin campaigning

sion expect to begin companies for a transit tax.

"This only keeps us going to June 1993, after that we need a source of dedicated revenue," said SMART board president Matt Wirgau, a Troy-resident. "It could be a sales tax, it could be a property tax, but we need something."

and new revenue
In addition, SMART will eliminate
nearly \$4.5 million in what Duggan
called "unnecessary reserves."
The move frees \$1 million held for

self-insurance, as well as a \$3.45 million workers compensation re-

serve.
THE \$1 MILLION RESERVE fund isn't needed because of other tind six alliation research lund isn't needed because of other assets already held by SMART. Dug-gan said. The \$3.45 million compen-sation fund isn't needed, he added because the state will already cover worker claims should SMART cease operation.

worker claims should SMART seraceperating.
At \$47.8 million, SMART's projected 1992-93 budget is \$5.3 million less than this year's
SMART officials still nope to merge with the Detroit Department of Transportation, though there have been an recent talks.

Collectible Chafts

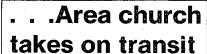
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By Wayne Peal stal! writer

Mass transit is more than just a dollars-and-cents issue for some area residents. For them, it's a

area residents. For them, it's a moral issue, too.

"I remember being in Detroit recently and seeing about cight me, with Will Work ton Food signs recalled Ann Interest O'Sullivan of Formington Hills." If hought that even if I could give these men a job cleaning windows or painting my house, they probably couldn't even of the country windows or painting my house, they probably couldn't even.

That kind of thinking spurred O'Sullivan and other Burmingham Unitarian Church members into action.

Unitarian curves continued to the continued of major bus routes was annumend members of the church's social justice committee gathered roughly 50 signatures on petitions calling for services to be continued.

continued. Now that the shutdown is on hold, members are preparing tot another campaign — this time assuring the future of regional mass transit.

"WE'RE LOOKING AT things very carefully." Birmingnam resi-dent Annis Pratt said. We want to get as much information as we can." Last week's announcement that

social issue," said Pratt, an occa-sional SMART rider, "For a metro-politan area, lacking adequate mass transit, is a major, major is-

While SMART and community officials are debating the merits of a property tax or sales tax, group members are researching the issue

members are researching the Issue of their own their own

point to its vital necessity for table who use it.

There are many, many people who wouldn't be able to get to wark, or to school, without the buses. Osulivan said. We d like to speak for them.

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