

Oakland commissioners cautious on SMART millage

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

With few exceptions, county officials weren't ready to predict passage of the SMART millage proposal in Oakland on the basis of the overwhelming victories it received in Macomb and Wayne counties.

But the SMART victories Tuesday probably bode well for the millage proposal in the June 6 election, they agree. That's when 20 Oakland communities will vote on raising property taxes to provide money to rescue this financially strapped transit system.

"What did you expect?" asked Oakland County commissioner Sue Ann Douglas, a vocal critic of SMART. "It was a special election with a very small turnout (about 15 percent)."

"I'm still not happy about SMART," said Douglas. "But Tuesday's results look positive for SMART in Oakland County."

Douglas, who has criticized SMART for alleged mismanagement and financial irresponsibility, attributed the SMART victory to good politics, rather than a grassroots well of support. "They (SMART officials) knew how to run an election. They got their vote out and they won."

Oakland commissioner Nancy L. Quarles, D-Southfield, agreed that passage of the SMART millage bodes well for the controversial proposal in Oakland.

"I'm not ready to say it will pass," said Quarles, a consistent supporter of SMART (Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation). "But people want to improve themselves. They want to go to school, go to work, to make something of themselves. SMART will help."

Quarles said she will continue to work hard to assure the SMART millage proposal passes in her community.

SMART asked voters to approve an increase of a one-third mill in property taxes, something that would increase cost the owner of a \$100,000 house about \$16.50 a year. The three-year proposal is to allow time for a more permanent solution to public transportation in the metropolitan region.

According to results released by SMART, about 61 percent of the 71,828 voters who turned out in Macomb County (or about 15 percent of those registered) supported the millage increase.

In Wayne County, about 67 percent of the 66,108 voters who

turned supported the increase. That's about 12 percent of the registered voters, according to SMART.

The same ballot proposal will be on the ballot in 20 Oakland County communities on June 6. Those communities are Auburn Hills, Berkley, Beverly Hills Village, Bingham Farms Village, Birmingham, Clawson, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin Village, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Madison Heights, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Pontiac, Royal Oak, Royal Oak Township, Southfield and Troy.

Matthew M. Wirgau, one of two Oakland County representatives on the SMART board of directors, was an exception to those who were cautious about the upcoming vote in Oakland.

"I'm predicting victory," he said Wednesday, showing more support for the SMART millage in Oakland than in Macomb or Wayne counties.

The polling indicated that more than 60 percent of the likely voters in Oakland support the SMART millage, Wirgau said. The same polling indicated support was slightly less among likely voters in Macomb and Wayne.

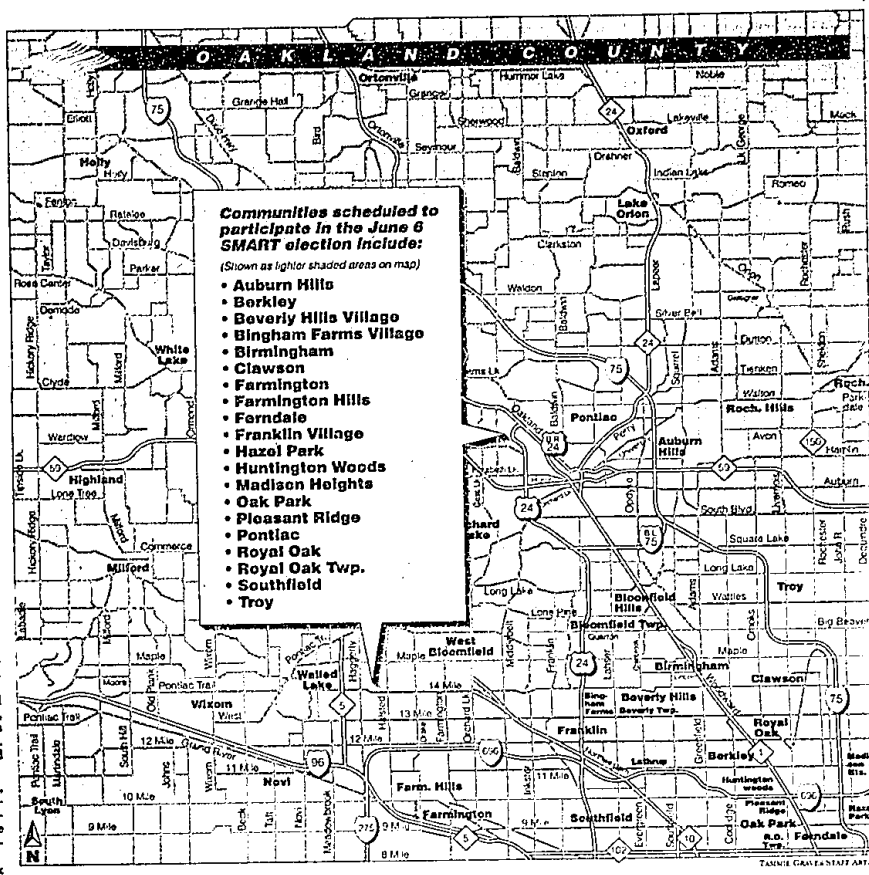
"If we had that much support in Macomb and Wayne, we should also do well in Oakland," Wirgau said.

The support is solid, he said, because SMART is important to the future of the region. "A good transit system is important to the handicapped, the unemployed and business," Wirgau said. "It's also important to the overall quality of life."

Furthermore, there was no real reason to vote against SMART, said Wirgau. "A few politicians postured against higher taxes. But most people realize a good transit system is important."

One SMART critic, however, said legislation pending in Lansing may yet force the transit system to reorganize — something he insists is necessary to get accountability and fiscal responsibility.

"It looks like we may be stuck with SMART for now," said Oakland County commissioner David L. Moffitt, R-Farmington Hills. "But there is legislation pending in Lansing" that would enable Oakland to either pull out of SMART — or threaten to pull out — unless there are changes to make the SMART more efficient.



AN OUTDOOR MASS ON MEMORIAL DAY

Join us for a Memorial Day mass on the beautiful and majestic grounds of All Saints, Mt. Elliott, Mt. Olivet or Resurrection Cemetery. Outside. Under the open sky. At the resting place for those to be remembered. Mass will be offered at all four locations on Monday morning, May 29th, Memorial Day. All are welcome.

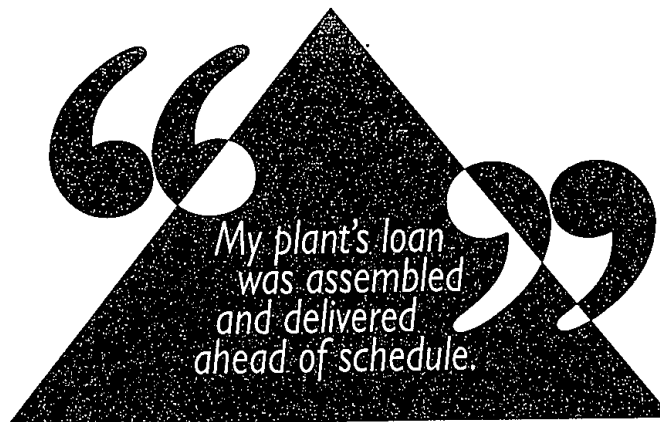
All Saints Cemetery
Nesley at Andersonville Road
Waterford 625-9633
Mass at 10:00 a.m.

Resurrection Cemetery
Clinton River Road at 17 Mile
Clinton Township 286-9020
Mass at 10:30 a.m.

Mt. Olivet Cemetery
Van Dyke at McNichols
Detroit 365-3650
Mass at 10:00 a.m.

Mt. Elliott Cemetery
Mt. Elliott at Kewchival
Detroit 567-0048
Mass at 11:00 a.m.

Mt. Elliott Cemetery Association
Keepers of Catholic Family Tradition



We're Geared For Fast Turnaround of Commercial Loans.

We know you need efficient cash flow for your business to operate smoothly. So we're equipped to help. Our commercial relationship managers are now authorized to approve most loans themselves. So you can get approval fast. And you can get financing as quickly as your business needs arise—to bid a contract, purchase equipment or expand your facility. We've put our trust in our relationship managers.

Just as you will, after relying on them for any or all of your banking needs, business or personal. Phone 1-800-CALL-MNB today. You'll find that our bank is good for business.

Michigan National Bank

