

# SMART passage likely June 6

By BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Voters in Farmington, Farmington Hills and much of the rest of Oakland County will be able to identify with California voters June 6 when they decide whether or not to approve a tax increase to support the SMART bus system.

Voters in Wayne and Macomb counties already passed the measure May 22 by close to a 2-1 margin, leaving backers and opponents calling passage overall likely.

But just as California voters often stay away in presidential elections because they already know the result before polls close in the Golden Gate State, some are worried that same effect could take place in Oakland County.

"We hope we can get our supporters to the polls," said Mike Duggan, SMART director. "If we do that, I think we'll win in Oakland County by a wide margin. Our phone banks show that support for SMART is even stronger in Oakland County than in Wayne and Macomb."

That's good news to many residents who spoke out for the beleaguered system at Farmington Hills City Council meetings. Voters in Farmington Hills, unlike those in Novi and Southfield, other communities, will be able to vote on the issue June 6.

Those communities that chose not to take part in the election will not have SMART bus service

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even if the measure does pass.

"This is something that benefits Farmington Hills, not just people in Detroit," said Hills resident Jane Hooper, a SMART rider. "Not only do businesses here benefit from getting people to come out from Detroit, but there are many professionals who take the bus downtown."

Hooper, who teaches at Wayne State University, said cities like Boston have thrived because of their use of public transportation.

But the measure, which would maintain present services and add other routes and computerization, has its opponents. One of the most outspoken is County Commissioner David Moffitt, whose district includes northern Farmington Hills.

"I continue to encourage a 'no' vote on the tax increase, because until SMART is reorganized, the state law is changed to let Oakland County taxpayers pursue that needed organization on an even playing field, voting 'yes' just gives SMART the funds to continue its inefficient and ultimately bankrupt ways."

Moffitt would have Oakland County pull out of the system without forfeiting about \$24 million in federal and state money.

"Once the law was changed, Oakland County would have \$24 million annually in federal and

state funds to finance its own competently managed, efficiently organized transport system, or contract with others to provide it."

Moffitt, along with fellow Commissioner Donn Wolf, who represents Farmington and southern Farmington Hills, has complained of mismanagement of the system.

"Poor management rewards inefficiency," Wolf said. "They (SMART) ran a good political campaign, they're financed by large labor unions, and the election was held on a Tuesday when there was a low turnout." Wolf said regardless of whether the issue passes in Oakland County, commissioners plan to exert more control over its management in the future.

"We had to file a Freedom of Information Act request to get financial information on SMART," he said. "Now that's embarrassing."

But Duggan said claims of incompetence are fueled by political motivations to wrest control of the system from the SMART authority.

"We took a picture of the documentation we gave them (commissioners)," Duggan said. "How can they say we haven't provided them with the information. We gave them a pile that was literally 2 feet high."

McCann said, "Our customers can rest assured that our commitment to customer service and technical expertise remains intact. We expect only positive changes as a result of our new partnership with Time Warner."

Customers' upcoming bills will remind them of the name change and will clearly indicate to whom bills should be paid.

MetroVision currently serves 36,000 customers in the three-city area.

## MetroVision is now Time-Warner

MetroVision of Oakland County — the cable television provider for Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi — is changing its name to Time Warner Cable, effective June 1. A week-long campaign designed to inform customers of the name change has begun.

The change was prompted by the closing of a partnership deal between MetroVision's parent company, Newhouse Broadcasting, and Time Warner Entertainment which became official April 1.

Although Stamford, Conn.-based Time Warner will assume management responsibility for the former Newhouse cable systems, local management teams are expected to retain a large amount of autonomy in day-to-day operations.

To convey this message, the company will use the slogan "Same People, New Possibilities" for its name-change awareness campaign.

General Manager Robert

## Speaking of speech . . .



At Beaumont Health Fair: Jessica Gohnick, a graduate intern in speech and language pathology, converses with 4-year-old Jenna Garber of Farmington Hills during the recent health fair at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. The event was part of Beaumont's 40th birthday.

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