

## Remapping

### SEMCOG to redraw traffic improvement plan

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

David Moffitt, an Oakland County commissioner from Farmington Hills, looked around the executive committee meeting room of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and shook his head.

"Gee, I wish my road officials had been here to advise me on this vote," Moffitt said after the Jan. 10 meeting in Detroit.

SEMCOG, the official planning agency for the seven-county region, is being forced to go back to the drawing board on its Traffic Improvement Program (TIP).

The \$2.1 billion, three-year TIP was cut drastically by 1) the Legislature's failure to pass \$350 million in fuel tax increases and 2) federal cuts under the ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act).

SEMCOG's executive committee debated whether to fight (bringing all construction to a halt), surrender to state-directed cuts, or negotiate. Its final decision is due at a special meeting in March. Consensus: It will be a negotiated surrender.

What bothered Moffitt was that so few local elected officials attended the monthly meeting.

No L. Brooks Patterson, Oak-

land County executive, or road commission types.

No Edward H. McNamara, Wayne County executive.

No Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer.

Of the so-called Big Four regional leaders, only Macomb County board chair Diane Kola-kowski showed up.

Birmingham Mayor Dante Lanzetta denounced SEMCOG's "policy of vigorous surrender" but voted with the rest to advise negotiating road construction cut-backs with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

A bewildering blizzard of road fund numbers is floating around, complicated by the fact that federal, state and local funds are involved. Outgoing MDOT director Patrick Nowak told SEMCOG the situation was further complicated by the fact that the feds changed categorical figures.

In a nutshell, there appears to be a 26 percent cut in available money over the next three years. Gov. John Engler and MDOT promptly announced four state projects would be given priority:

■ Constructing M-5, the Hagerly connector, between 12 and 14 Mile roads in eastern Novi — \$33 million.

■ Widening I-96 between Chilson and Dorr roads in Livingston County — \$12 million.

■ Constructing M-50 to highway standards from Romeo to Plank roads in Macomb County — \$40 million.

■ Rebuilding the 60-year-old Davison freeway in the middle of Detroit — \$65 million.

"These projects were identified as priorities in the Regional Transportation Plan and the State Long Range Plan," said Louis H. Lambert, Nowak's deputy director.

SEMCOG officials had no list of available local projects that had been cut.

"Many hours of planning are being thrown out the window," objected Muri Lou Murray, chair of the Washtenaw County board.

"This is becoming partisan," said Democrat Murray as she cast the lone nay vote.

"We have taken the high road in not vilifying anyone," cautioned SEMCOG executive director John Amberger of Livonia, adding: "There's an anti-tax feeling out there."

Amberger outlined four roads SEMCOG could take:

1. Proceed with the current Transportation Improvement

Program — impossible because the federal government won't approve projects for which funds aren't available. Moreover, scarce available funds could go elsewhere in the state.

2. Re-examine all projects, including the state's four favored projects — impossible because Engler would veto it, and nothing would be done.

3. Approve the Engler-Nowak plan — the one Lanzetta called "vigorous surrender." It would require serious cuts in local road programs, but keep on pressure for a fuel tax increase.

4. Approve the state proposal with negotiations — moves critical projects forward, still requires serious cuts, keeps up pressure for a fuel tax increase, allows possible compromises on some projects. SEMCOG selected this option.

"The executive committee has the power to bring all of this to a screeching halt," added Paul Tait, SEMCOG deputy director.

Washtenaw's Murray made a wry joke about the situation. "We could give it a positive spin: There will be no construction delays for the summer tourist season," she said.

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## Karekin I visit delights area Armenians

BY LARRY PALADINO  
STAFF WRITER

Mourad Shirvanian couldn't contain his joy over the weekend visit to Oakland County of Karekin I, head of the Armenian Church.

"This is excellent. This is an historic visit for our religion," said Shirvanian, who broadcasts an Armenian program on cable television in Southfield. "This is our pope. I think he is a good choice. He is a smart guy." Shirvanian was among hundreds at St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield for a Friday night service and banquet at the church.

"He represents an unknown line going back to 301 A.D.," said Simeon Javizian of West Bloom-

field.

Harry Keulean of Farmington Hills said the church leader "sounds like he's looking forward to a much bigger and better place in the world for Armenians. He has the enthusiasm and charisma to be our leader for a long time to come. He's putting Armenians in the forefront again and uniting Armenians throughout the world under one church."

Harry Torzian of West Bloomfield said there has been a split in the Armenian church community that Karekin, as the Supreme Patriarch, can heal. "I see no trace of resentment or his holiness," Torzian said. "Armenians are getting more mature. If there's an argument among Armenians, there's a

grudge that goes from one generation to another. But with Armenian independence the old equations are changing."

Alex Manougian, founder of Masco Corp. and the company's chairman emeritus, was a special guest. He is one of the largest philanthropists in the Armenian world and the Supreme Patriarch flew into Detroit on Manougian's private plane.

"This visit is important because we like to know who our master is," the 94-year-old Manougian said. "Very seldom does a Catholicos (Patriarch) get out to the people. He's pretty good."

Edmond Azadian, Manougian's personal assistant, said he has

known the 63-year-old Karekin since the man was 29 and the two of them taught in the same grammar school in Lebanon.

"I taught French and he taught religion," Azadian said. Rev. Nourhan Manougian, a pastor of an Armenian Church in Houston, flew to Detroit just for the visit. "This is an auspicious event for all Armenians," he said.

Manougian was among the church's clergy and membership who attended the Friday night service, which included the Eastern Diocese's leader, Archbishop Barsamian, and St. John's pastor, Rev. Father Barakat Verutian.



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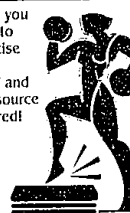
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