## State plan gives more for local transit

Oakland communities will get more money for local transit needs under the assistance fund-ing plan announced by the gover-

ing plan almosined by May a more office.

The area transit system — SMART, or Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation — will also receive about \$4 million more in opera-

tional funds for 1998. But officials are cautious about how it will be spent.

The two-part windfall is a result of a record level of funding provided by the state for mass transit in 1998, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) that outlined its operating assistance funding in a press release in December.

This year's state funding to be shared by transit systems

around the state will be \$162 million, according to MDOT, an increase of about \$35 million over 1997.

This year's state funding is a record high, MDOT said, because of "accumulated surplus from previous years that may not be sustained in future years."

SMART and other transit systems, presumably, are still evaluating their respective allocations, said Dan G. Dirks, deputy

general manager of the transit system. But he said early indications point to more mency in two areas:

• Communities will get about 33 percent more money in the form of municipal credits to be used for local transit needs.

• SMART will get about \$4 million more than expected to be used in Oakland, Macomb and suburban Wayne counties — the transit system's main service

area.

Municipal credits are derived from mency collected by the state — mainly from gasoline taxes — and distributed by SMART directly to local communities for transit needs.

SMART expected to distribute about \$3 million in municipal credits, said Dirks. But under the state funding announced last month, the amount will be closer to \$4 million.

"That means local communaties can expect about a third more in municipal credits this year," said Dirks.

Birmingham, for example, received \$15,300 in municipal

received \$10,300 in municipal credits last year, according to SMART. In fiscal 1998, the city will get about \$20,400. All communities in the SMART service area — includ-

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### Court

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any reason comes under the eye of the court system again, the case would automatically roll to Sosnick.

ense would automatically roll to Seanick.

And that's the vision for each case handled by the Family Division. Although the Friend of the Court will continue to process domeastic cases and the former Juvenile Court staff will process juvenile cases, they are both now working for the Family Division. A new check system is designed to flag any juvenile, who is about to victim of a divorce or domestic violence. If so, the family division judge previously involved hears the juvenile's case.

One judge, one family is an admittedly heady goal. Bill Bartlam, deputy clerk of Probate Court, says a conservative estimate is that it will mean 18,000 more record checks a year of divorces and personal protection orders.

Personal protection orders.

divorces and personal protection orders.

Personal protection orders, now concentrated in the family division, were previously spread among the circuit court judges, with, according to Bartlam, "17 judges doing them 17 different ways."

ways." \
- All involved admit, that in Judge Young's words, the new family division is "a work in progress."

progress."

"We're not done by any means in terms of the planning," Bart-

in terms of the planning, bart-lam says.

"It's a major change in the way cases are handled with families and with children," Sosnick says.

"The dream is that court services

and with children, "Sosnick says.
The dream is that court services
and private sector services
respond to their needs." A direct
link from the family division to
Youth Assistance services in
every community is part of the
new package.
Although family division
judges are clustered on the first
and second floors of the court
house, the range of family matters is being handled in several
different facilities and in multiple and non-adjacent areas with
in the courthouse. This, Sosnick
acknowledges, doesn't add up their family friendly god.
The ultimate goal is to have
all circuit court functions and
staff under one roof," Sosnick
says. Estimated time to do that
is five years.

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