

## OBSERVATION POINT

# Local Mass Transit System Would Save Money, Help People Travel



By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

Let's say that you're an average guy living here in the suburbs. You've got a job, and census data indicates that your average salary is something around \$15,000 per year.

That comes to \$288.46 gross per week, or \$7.21 per hour.

You work down in Detroit, and every morning you leave the house and fight the traffic on the ditches. You may listen to J.P. to relieve the monotony, but by the time you're through you've spent an hour getting to work and another hour getting back home at the end of the day.

That's two hours per day, which at \$7.21 an hour is \$14.42 per day or \$72.10 per week, not counting parking charges downtown.

If you assume that you're getting three weeks of vacation when you're not fighting traffic, you are eating up \$72.10 per week commuting by car for each of the 48 weeks you work, for a yearly total of \$3332.90 gross cost, not including taxes, withholding, parking, etc.

IT MAY SOUND A little crude, but that \$3332.90 is a pretty good guess at just what it costs in wasted time for the average guy in the suburbs to commute to and from work in his own car.

That seems pretty steep, you might say. Why not take the train or the bus?

Well, the only guys who can

take the train are those who live over by Birmingham and can take the Grand Trunk line downtown. And for buses; well, forget 'em. There's just no effective bus service from the suburbs to downtown.

In fact, the Detroit area is the only large metropolitan area in the entire country without any kind of mass transit system worthy of the name.

As the \$3332.90 tab indicates, the costs of not having such a service are pretty high.

But they don't include other kinds of costs, such as to the elderly person who lives in the suburbs but cannot drive, and who wants to go shopping. The alternatives are to find a friend or relative with a car or to call an increasingly expensive cab.

Or the costs to suburban businesses which want to hire employees from throughout the metropolitan area but who are stymied by the lack of mass transit for people to come to their jobs.

NOW THAT Governor Milliken's two cent gas tax has finally got over most of the legal hurdles, a steady source of funding for local mass transit efforts seems now available.

Credit for this accomplishment must go to a local man, State Senator Carl Pursell, of Plymouth, who almost single-handedly wore down his Republican colleagues in the state senate and

got them to compromise on a workable tax package to support both road building and help for mass transit.

Being a suburbanite, Pursell knows darn well just how important a good mass transit system is for this area, and he deserves a lot of credit for his steady, patient, understanding exercise in legislative leadership to get the package through.

IT WON'T HAPPEN overnight, Pursell warns, and he's backed by Thomas Lipscomb, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Mass Transit Authority (SEMTA), which is the body responsible for developing mass transit in this area.

Lipscomb, a former Army general who was brought to Detroit to help straighten out the mass transit mess, said the other day in a meeting with a group of local mayors that mass transit would not come immediately as a full-fledged train or monorail system. Instead, he foresees a bus system linking local suburban communities, initially on a low frequency basis for a few days each week.

Answering local fears, Lipscomb pointed out that "school busing is irrelevant to our mission. Our service is to the general public through individual fares, and you can't get school busing under that."

So the senior citizen who wants to shop or get to the library ... or youngsters who don't have cars

and want to get to a Little League game ... or housewives who don't drive or don't have a second car in the family and needs to get to

the shopping center -- all these would benefit by the kind of system SEMTA and Lipscomb are talking about.

It'll take a while, but it's under way. And that, in our meatless high-tax world, is some real progress.



Tim Richard writes

## Democrats Should Take Good Look At FitzPatrick

I've long contended that if the Democratic Party collectively had any brains, it would forget its current crop of would-be gubernatorial candidates and take a good look at Bob FitzPatrick, chairman of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners.

One chap making gubernatorial noises is former Detroit Mayor Jerry ("On a clear day you can see the White House") Cavanagh, whose political star has probably set as far as major state offices are concerned. Some Democrats in the 2nd Congressional District (including Livonia and Plymouth) are, with great logic, urging Jerry, now an Ann Arbor resident, to consider Marv Esch's congressional seat, but Jerry's got the bug for bigger things.

Sander Levin? Never did a Democrat come so close to getting elected governor and yet leave such a bad taste in the mouths of his fellow partisans. Sandy came within 40,000 votes of toppling Bill Milliken in the 1970

gubernatorial race and is itching to go again.

FitzPatrick's star, however, is certainly rising. He was a comparative newcomer on the county board when the 1969 salary uproar struck, and it was FitzPatrick who put together a compromise plan that satisfied most elements on the board. In his second term, FitzPatrick became chairman, nudging the deadheaded "Zak Pack" into relative oblivion.

Bearing for the life of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, FitzPatrick and friends came up with a new dues plan that saved the voluntary association's finances, at least in the short run, and FitzPatrick put in some time as chairman of the six-county agency.

Still, Democrats around here say sure, Bob's a great guy, good future, but he's not well enough known outstate.

And so it was a pleasant surprise last week to find some outstate Democrats booming Bob FitzPatrick as the 1974 Democratic candidate for governor.

They've got bumper stickers, and they claim plenty of support in most of the major outstate counties -- Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Genesee, Kent, Berrien and others.

"There's always been a split between Wayne and the metropolitan counties and the outstate counties," a Calhoun County politico said. Pointing to FitzPatrick, he said: "This is ended. He has helped even the Upper Peninsula with their problems."

Bob FitzPatrick is an unusual politician because he thinks in terms of solving problems rather than in manipulating such blocs as labor, blacks, the poor, the young, the disadvantaged, Detroit, outstate.

Of the gubernatorial boomlet, FitzPatrick himself grins: "It's fun to talk about ... The trouble with the Democratic Party is it likes to run the same old faces over and over."

But he feels there's too much in Wayne County to do -- the headless administrative structure still needs to be overhauled with new enabling laws; there are a jail and a juvenile home to be built; there are some goofy judges who need to be cut down to size.

So FitzPatrick isn't pushing the gubernatorial thing, for now. "I tell 'em, forget the campaign, just give me the money," he says. And then he changes the subject to how to bring county government into the 20th century and get it ready for the 21st.

R. T. Thompson writes

## Stempien Has Unusual Role: A Lobbyist On House Payroll

Interesting indeed is the news from Lansing that former State Rep. Marv Stempien (D-Livonia) has formally registered with the state as a lobbyist while serving as a special House consultant on proposed horse and dog racing legislation.

In so many words, it means that Stempien is a lobbyist on the House payroll.

It was known last fall, after Stempien's unsuccessful bid for Congress, seeking the seat held by Marvin Esch, that House Speaker William A. Ryan (D-Detroit) had offered him a job as consultant to draft legislation which would lead to a revamping of state laws on horse racing and the inclusion of dog racing.

Ryan was one of the prime boosters of the dog racing bill that came within a vote or two of passing in the last session of the Legislature.

Matter of fact, it wasn't until

the closing day of the 1972 session that the bill finally went down.

The defeat was largely due to an ill-advised Florida visit in December by numerous members of the House and Senate for the express purpose of attending meetings there but actually to build up votes for the dog racing bill.

However, the actions of the legislators in Florida were carefully followed by news reporters, and the stories of their activities were duly recorded in the news columns.

As a direct result of the exposures, several members of the House and Senate switched votes by just enough to whip the proposed bill.

Ryan expressed unhappiness with the outcome and almost immediately let it be known that he would support a new bill revamping the current racing act and adding dog racing.

When Stempien was first being considered, the talk in Lansing was that he had been offered \$18,000 or \$19,000 to draw up the bill for Ryan that would include dog racing and off-track betting, among other things.

The latest information is that Stempien's pay as a consultant is about \$175 per day plus expenses and his total bill to the state is expected to be between \$8,000 and \$9,000 -- quite a bit different from the figures of December.

The thing that irks one a bit is that House Speaker Ryan had that kind of money in his budget for such projects. It appears Ryan has an unlimited budget for use on House matters, and certainly this is one.

Ryan is quoted as saying in

Lansing that Stempien will probably complete his main work on the bill within a few days though he may be used after that on a spot basis to answer legal questions or work on a particular provision after the legislation is actually introduced.

When questioned about the propriety of having a registered lobbyist on the House payroll, Ryan acknowledged that it was very unusual but that he hasn't found any reason for ending the relationship.

Stempien has registered with the state as a lobbyist and attorney for Provincial House, a large Lansing-based nursing home firm.

We have long been amazed by the doings of state senators and representatives after they lose out in elections.

Stempien, a resident of Livonia, has often attended the races at the Detroit Race Course as a guest or on special occasions.

The DRC is one of the city's largest taxpayers in property taxes and by the fact that the city receives \$600,000 from the state's share of the mutual handle for the additional policing and road work required by having a track inside the city limits.

Perhaps it's only a job, but the bill he is preparing for Ryan and the House is one that will have a definite effect on business at the track which has thrived on racing under the Detroit Racing Association and harness racing by Wolverine Raceway.

Thus, as a consultant, Stempien is busy preparing legislation that will hurt his own hometown. As indicated above, we sometimes are amazed at what legislators do after being defeated.

## Editorial & Opinion

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## Sense And Nonsense

"Euphemism" is the bad habit we get into where we use a smoke screen of gentle words to obscure the harsh facts. Some of the more popular euphemisms:

"Price adjustment" -- All the prices we even heard of are adjusted one way: Up.

"Discount" -- It's actually the regular price. What is billed as the regular price is what the store would like to get, and probably will, next year.

"... Maintain quality education" -- This is the school board's way of saying you're going to pay

higher taxes for the same old schooling.

"Concerned citizens" -- A well organized pressure group trying to look spontaneous and grass rootsy; usually but not always from the right wing.

"Unique" -- A popular one among educators, especially when they're writing news releases. It means: We haven't done enough research to know whether any other school district has ever done this. (Usually, someone else has.)

"Disadvantaged" -- Losers.