CURRENT ALTERNATIVE TO SUBURBAN TRANSIT

OBSERVATIONEONI

Transit Needed Between Suburbs

By Philip H. Power Publisher

Ever since the energy crisis came upon us, a lot people have been suggesting that it might well be spur that at last forces some movement in this a's long-stalled mass transit system.

area's long-stalled mass transit system.
The argument is simple.
Gasoline will either be rationed or more heavily
taxed (up to a dollar a gallon, some say) than
presently. At that point, private cars will either be
too much hassie or too expensive for most folks. So
people will be forced to use public transport more
than they are now (an estimated average of 3.5 per nt of daily trips in this area are by public trans

cent or analy trips in this area are of point trains port).

The money is available to help public transit systems, both from federal matching grants and from the new Michigan gas tax, which is presently bringing in something like \$22 million per year for mass transit.

HOWEVER BRIGHT, the outlook isn't all that' good for public transit benefiting very many people who live here in the northwest suburbs.

First problem is that public transit has been neglected for so long that only very little can be done to improve 1 in the short run.

"It takes a long time to upgrade transportation," according to Thomas Lipscomb, head of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation authority. "We're now involved in too little too late."

Fuel Crisis Being Felt --With Benefits

As I attended and spoke at "earth day" sessions begin-ning three years ago, we talked in terms of major crises in some distant dec-

crises in some distant decade.
Although we could see pollution problems as immediate, we talked of an implosion of resources and a declining gross national product
as something we should
spare our children or grandchildren.
We didn't think an energy
crisis would hit us this fast.

versis would this a niergy versis would this us his fast. Last summer, when gasoline prices moved over the 40-cent mark, there was some decline in tourist travel to Michigan's northland. I suspect much of the decline was due more to the miserable weather of spring and the first part of summer than to gasoline prices. And that lackey lof the car houstry, the Auto Chk, kept telling us there was plenty of fuel just fill up in daylight. In the last two weeks, however, we've begunt to get a

In the last two weeks, how-ever, we've begun even we've, we've begun even be living in the 21st century. The change has begun and is already noticeable. Despite some guilt feel-ings, I drove to the wood-lands of Livingston County for a little relaxation, Satur-day, Traffic was much slow-er than usual on 196. In the past, a car going 60 on that stretch would be passed by three-fourths of the other ve-hicles.

hicles.
Last Saturday, a speed of
O allowed one to pass
two-thirds of the other vehicles. People are really
starting to observe a 50 mph
speed limit voluntarily.

Editorial & Opinion

For example, there are now only around 1,000 bases operating in the metropolitan area, each with a capacity of around 50 people. These bases cannot themselves take up the added demand. SEMTA has been trying to buy more bases, but federal money for matching grants has not yet arrived. Another example involves the most likely long-range mass transit system; rail. But since so little has been done up to now, it will take a long time for any effective rail system to be put in operation, even if construction is started soon. Lipscomb estimates the first train would not be running until 1880 and an effective system would not be operating until 1990.

SECOND PROBLEM affecting people living in this area is that the assumption of the mass transit people is that such a system will be used to get people back and forth from the suburbs to the inner city. Ť

That's the proposition which is motivating efforts to find more rail cars for the Grand Trunk commuter trains running from Pontiac to Detroit and to run a study on a commuter rail line from Ann Arbor, but

es deminoratific

it doesn't help families in Livonia or Farmington or Redford Township or Southfield.

This assumption of old fashianed suburbs acting as bedroom communities for the inner city is simply out of date. In recent years more and more industries have built new plants in the suburbs instead of in Detroit, and people living in the suburbs more and more are driving to work in another suburb instead of downtown. Shopping patterns are similar; most folks here shop in local shopping centers or stores rather than downtown.

Although I don't have any of the fancy figures the statisticians have, I suspect that right now as much transportation need exists within and between indivisual suburbs as does from the suburbs to downtown Detroit.

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It would be a tragic waste of money if in the crisis situation we now face, transit planners went forward in a rush on the unrealisitic assumption that mass transit means transportation from the suburbs to Detroit.

What is needed instead is a mass transit system that runs within the suburbs, too, and thereby meets the real needs of people rather than the assumptions

Suburbs Like Women's Lib

READERS' FORUM

Please type (or write clearly) and limit letters to 300 words.

Letters must be signed, with the writer's address. Names will be withheld only at the writer's request and for good cause.

The editor reserves the right to reject un-

Wenner's lib roes to its perhaps better than, their dates and ber feredu tried. We cannot be signed, which we will be decided to the control of the department of the control of the department An Exotic Disease Do you know any card-carrying members of the "Disease of the Month" to the Thisease of the Month" to the Thisease of the Month of the Thisease of the Thisease of the Month of the Thisease of the Month

EDITON:

Critic of welfare reform should not be at the forfeilhave mounted a counterstatack and her using the poor
and the old\as a shield to
protect the dishonest and the
greedy. Two points must be made:

First, had the critics bothered to read the welfare report issued by the Oakland
County prosecutor's office,
they would have discovered
this on the first page:

"We must be careful to
separate the attack on weltare fraud and those who abuse the system from those
who are legitimately receivting public assistance and are,
in need of help. It is the
cheater, it is the greedy, it is
mismanagement, it is
mismanagement, it is
subject of this attack.

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