

Membership to be elected?

Fund drops 'bombshell' on SEMCOG

By TIM RICHARD

Metropolitan Fund, Inc. is expected to stir a vigorous debate over its proposal that the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments have direct citizen elections and be designated as a "regional charter commission" for the seven-county region.

The potential bombshell was dropped Wednesday at the non-profit research agency's annual meeting. The proposal came from a policy committee and was endorsed by the full board of trustees. The exact vote was not taken, but was reported to be heavily in favor.

SEMCOG's general assembly is made up of all 100 or so member cities, townships, villages, counties, school and college districts who appoint elected officials.

THE METRO FUND study proposed the SEMCOG assembly have 41 members - 10 to be elected by the county or city councils of commissioners in the region from among their members; 10 to be elected by the members and township supervisors from their members; and 20 to be elected directly by the public from the existing 20 State Senate districts in the region.

"The 41st member would be directly elected by the public from the region to serve as chairman of the general assembly."

The new proposal is significant because SEMCOG would no longer have to rely on local units of government to join voluntarily, and citizens would have a direct voice in SEMCOG's leadership. With more than 400 local governments in the region, SEMCOG rarely had more than 100 members.

Several years ago, Metro Fund President Kent Mathewson angered

Free bus rides are approved for older adults

A free bus fare plan for senior citizens is being put into effect throughout Southeast Michigan.

The free fare plan was announced April 22 by William C. Marshall, board chairman of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA).

In approving a request from Detroit for a free senior citizen fare and lowered DSR fares for downtown Detroit inside Grand Boulevard, SEMTA currently extended the opportunity to other municipalities and counties in the region to provide similar reductions for their senior citizens.

"Because SEMTA doesn't have sufficient funds to subsidize lowered fares," explains Marshall, "Detroit will provide the necessary subsidy money rather than reduce present service levels."

The SEMTA proposal will make it possible for any city, township, village or county in the region to purchase bus tickets, and make them available free to their senior citizens. Bus tickets would be valid on all SEMTA operated bus lines and on the DSR.

Fares for the free bus fare would be the off-peak fares from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and after 6 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Travel between 6:30 and 9 a.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. will be at the regular fares.

Free fares are also in effect all day Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

"We wish to emphasize that our action doesn't mandate reduced fare for the SEMTA region," concludes Marshall. "We have left the initiative with, and the decision up to, those local governments who wish to provide this service to their senior citizens."

State Police ready to begin car inspections

Michigan motorists are advised that vehicle inspection teams from the State Police, and about 40 other agencies, are preparing to begin the 1974 random vehicle law program.

Motorists coming into having their vehicles ready for inspection are reminded that the items to be checked include tires, brakes, lights, steering, turn signals, horn, exhaust system, windshield wipers and washers, glass areas, driver and car credentials.

Last year there were 302,857 vehicles checked in Michigan by 12 teams from the State Police and by officers from 43 other law enforcement agencies.

Passenger vehicles checked in 1973 had an initial passing rate of 41 per cent, up slightly from the year before.

Infractions issued, 61,807 traffic tickets, which included 16,124 for operator license deficiencies. Another 832 were for driving on revoked or suspended licenses. State troopers made 418 criminal arrests.

State Police teams are now completing their annual inspection of school buses in the state and will be moving to the check lane program within two weeks.

SEMCOG officials by proposing the SEMCOG chairman be elected. E. Robert Turner, then SEMCOG's executive director, and Mel Ravitz, then SEMCOG assembly chairman, felt the proposal smacked of regional government and of undermining SEMCOG's low-key, voluntary service organization image.

The new Metro Fund proposal asks the Michigan Legislature to re-evaluate the present structure of regional "governance" and to designate SEMCOG as a regional charter body.

In a second stage, "the legislature would enact a permanent system of regional governance for southeast Michigan based upon the three-year trial and upon the recommendation of the regional charter study."

MAKING THE report was Thomas R. Reid, executive director of civic and governmental affairs of Ford Motor Co. and chairman of the Metro Fund board.

The policy committee which made the proposal included:

R.J. Alexander, chairman of SEM-

COG's advisory council on regional planning; Paul D. Borman, assistant dean of Wayne State University's law school; Max M. Fisher, industrialist and philanthropist;

Robert FitzPatrick, chairman of the Wayne County board and former SEMCOG chairman; Robert W. Fleming, president of The University of Michigan; the late Robert F. Hastings, chairman of Smith, Hinckman & Grylls Associates;

Joseph L. Hudson Jr., chairman of the J.L. Hudson Co.; Mathewson; William C. Marshall, chairman of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority;

Federal appeals Judge Wade H. McCree Jr.; Dean E. Richardson, chairman of Manufacturers National Bank; E. Harwood Rydholm, vice president and director of civic affairs of Chrysler Corp.;

Charles M. Tucker, secretary-treasurer of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials and former vice mayor of Pontiac; Stanley J. Winkelman, department store head;

Dr. Reginald Wilson, president of Wayne County Community College; Leonard Woodcock, president of the UAW; and Donald E. Young, vice president of corporate communications of Burroughs Corp.

Metropolitan Fund, headquartered at 211 W. Fort in Detroit, is an education and research foundation. It provided the first organizational and financial strength for such agencies as the Transportation and Land Use Study (TALUS), SEMCOG, SEMTA and New Detroit Inc.

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