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## Rapid transit proposal

# Legislators hit auto tax increase

Two key state Senate Taxation Committee members are dashing cold water on a plan to raise the motor vehicle registration fee an average of \$10 a car a year in three metropolitan counties in order to finance rapid transit construction.

And they found Wayne, Oakland and Macomb county leaders lined up 3-1 against both the tax plan and the reorganization of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMATA) to give Detroit a direct voice.

Committee Chairman John T. Bowman (D-Roseville) and ranking Republican member Harry DeMaso of Battle Creek indicated in a public hearing Monday in Pontiac they found many faults in the rapid transit finance plan. That plan, embodied in Senate Bill 921, was agreed to by Gov. Milliken, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and the SEMATA board a few weeks ago.

Meanwhile, Oakland County officials indicated they would come up with an alternative vehicle tax plan that would apply statewide.

Persons from Plymouth, Rochester, Birmingham, Farmington, Bloomfield Township and Detroit testified during the four-hour hearing.

**BOWMAN REPEATEDLY** said, "There's really not much support for the \$10 tax. I'm not trying to ram something down people's throats. We're not in a position to move on this bill right now."

As one person after another objected to levying a vehicle tax on only the three metropolitan counties of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb, Bowman said, "One reason the tax portion of this bill was confined to three counties was to free up out-state votes." He implied out-state lawmakers who might ordinarily be anti-tax would be tempted to support a vehicle tax that didn't apply to their constituencies.

DeMaso, a 19-year legislative veteran with an independent streak when it comes to supporting Gov. Milliken, hammered away in questioning at a

different theme: Southeast Michigan has no guarantee the federal government will come up with its \$700 million share of construction costs for the 1990 rapid transit plan.

And while proponents stressed the average tax hike would be \$10 on passenger vehicles, DeMaso added: "I notice you're really gonna clobber trucks."

DeMaso also found fault with taxing autos. In the long term, he said, smaller cars will yield smaller weight taxes, and so revenues to support a rapid transit bond issue will fail to grow as fast as construction costs.

**TWO OTHER** senators, not members of the Taxation Committee, opposed the bill.

Sen. Kerry Kammer (D-Portae) said in a letter it is unfair to tax just the three metropolitan counties.

Sen. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth), who guided a gasoline tax diversion bill through the Legislature three years ago in support of bus subsidies, favored use of federal shared revenue over the vehicle tax idea.

Pursell attacked the SEMATA reorganization plan, charging it violates the "one man, one vote" constitutional principle. The Milliken-Young SEMATA agreement asks for a 13-person SEMATA board. Five Detroiters appointed by Young, five suburbanites by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, and three by the governor (with his three subject to approval of six of the other 10 members).

Pointing to population figures, Pursell said the suburbs should get eight or nine seats, not five.

Sen. David Plawecki (D-Dearborn Heights), the bill's sponsor, said through his administrative assistant, Jim Dunn, that "the Arab oil boycott shows the need for multi-model transportation."

Answering Sen. DeMaso's charge about a lack of guaranteed federal funding, Dunn said "But we can guarantee \$700 million won't be returned (to southeast Michigan) if we don't provide a local tax share."

## the conversation pit

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## 2 men ed advisers

Dr. James Greiner, Wayne County Intermediate School District's assistant superintendent for special education, has been named chairman of the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Michigan Department of Education.

Marvin L. Howard of Birmingham

has also been named to the eight-member group.

The committee is charged with evaluating department of education services in special education and keeping the department informed of the needs of local school districts.

## Cage bird show set

The Motor City Bird Breeders Club of Detroit will hold its annual cage bird show from 6:10 p.m., Oct. 25, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Oct. 26, at 1001F Hall, 3248 W. Twelve Mile, between Coolidge and Greenfield, in Berkley. The show is open to the public.

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