

Total transit package has area reps grouching

By TIM RICHARD
"It's the way Ryan operates," said an exasperated State Rep. David Campbell (R-Clawson).

The freshman Oakland County legislator was referring to the "total transportation package" unveiled last week by State Rep. William Ryan (D-Detroit), widely considered the most powerful man in the Michigan Legislature.

Campbell was one of a half-dozen Oakland legislators who spent a half-day Friday seeking advice from local officials—leaders of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, the Oakland County Road Commission and the County Executive's office.

They agreed on only two things: 1) Ryan's months of negotiations had so subverted the legislative process that lawmakers don't understand what they're being asked to vote on in the next two weeks and 2) they should seek some specific dollar commitments to Oakland County before voting for the package.

THE "PACKAGE" Ryan announced is a maze of 10 bills and a proposed constitutional amendment that would pump an estimated \$188 in new money into Michigan roads, bridges and public transportation facilities.

Road Commission Managing Director John Grubba and SEMTA General Manager Larry Salci were in rare agreement about Ryan's methods.

"I don't understand why the legislature turned it over to us lobbyists and let us cut each other's throats," said Grubba, referring to the long negotiations Ryan conducted with transportation interests. "This process is an abomination."

Salci chimed in: "You have a committee process in the legislature, and you're not using it. We (transit interests) get into a room and cut each other's throats, and somebody (Ryan) speaks for us. If it's done in public, the problems can be resolved."

Salci put it another way: "I can agree to five things in that package. John Grubba can agree to five. Ryan puts it together and says, 'we've got a package.'"

"There's no question who runs that legislature," Campbell said. "As a freshman in the minority party, I have no input."

STATE REP. W.V. (Sandy) Brotherton (R-Farmington), who called the meeting, noted Ryan "doesn't want it (the transit proposal) worked on in committees. He wants it cut-and-dried. It subverts the legislative process."

Grubba asked that the package "be treated with benign neglect."

Brotherton pointed to two bills in the package that will go to the house urban affairs committee. Chairman of that committee is Ryan. With the exception of one short meeting on a minor bill, said Brotherton, Ryan hasn't called a meeting of the committee in four or five months.

State Rep. James Dedefaugh (R-Bloomfield) expressed his own frustration at the complex package. "It's easy to find things to vote against," said Dedefaugh, indicating he would prefer to support a total transportation package.

THE "TOTAL" transportation package contains these bundles:

- \$168.5 million in new revenue for transportation. The gasoline tax would be hiked to 11 cents (it's currently nine cents) to raise \$80 million; the diesel fuel tax would be hiked two cents to a total of seven cents to raise \$6 million. Weight taxes would be hiked 30 per cent for autos and 35 per cent for commercial vehicles and yield \$32 million. Some \$21 million of present sales tax revenues would be designated for transportation.

- The money would be distributed in these amounts: \$30 million for state highways, \$45 million to counties, \$27 million to cities and villages, \$4 million to critical bridges and \$7.5 million to a "comprehensive" grab-bag.

THE "COMPREHENSIVE" element bothered many at the meeting. It would cover rails, ports, bicycle paths and public transportation.

But no one knows how it will be carved up. "The legislators feel they're being asked to buy a pig-in-a-poke," said Rep. Dedefaugh.

Salci said he didn't know how much of the \$7.5 million would go for public transportation in the state and what portion of that would go to SEMTA.

Grubba said the package would mean about \$3.2 million in new revenue

to the Oakland County Road Commission. Another package, offered by Rep. Thomas Brown (D-Westland) and favored by the road interests, would be worth \$4.8 million to Oakland, Grubba said.

Grubba cautioned lawmakers to watch carefully the wording of bills. He recalled a bill that appeared to prohibit "the state" from building a Detroit subway but wouldn't prevent SEMTA, the City of Detroit or the Wayne County Road Commission from building a subway.

GRUBBA SEEMED pleased with portions of the package that would put a constitutional amendment before voters in 1978 to split the use of fuel and weight taxes 50-50 between road and transit uses, respectively.

Salci, however, called it "stupid" to "constitutionally lock yourself in."

Coalition formed to improve homes

Eighteen citizen organizations, representing more than one million Michigan members, have formed the Coalition for Nursing Home Reform and launched a statewide campaign to win passage of Senate Bill 659, a comprehensive reform bill now before the Michigan Legislature.

"Inadequate care, violations of basic human rights, and blatant disregard of the physical and emotional well-being of patients can no longer be permitted in Michigan nursing homes," said coalition leaders. "More than 30 homes are on the states' intent-to-deny



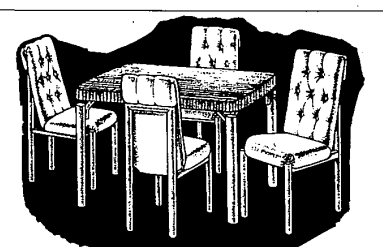
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License list, and many of them have been there since 1971.

"Member organizations of the coalition are demanding that major policy changes be made in the way nursing homes are regulated in Michigan," said a spokesman.

If enacted into law, Senate Bill 659 would protect patients from arbitrary transfers and discharges; guarantee privacy and other basic rights to nursing home residents; require improved nursing care and staff training; impose strong penalties on homes which violate patient rights and other state requirements.



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