

Republicans wrangle over SEMTA appointment

By TIM RICHARD

Republicans on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners will have a difficult, delicate decision to make the morning of their April 26 full board meeting.

They must decide whether to appoint one of their own—Commissioner Robert Page (R-Birmingham)—to the board of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, or to pick an outsider who has no other political post.

Two outsiders are interested: Henry M. Hogan Jr., co-publisher of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, and Paul F. Lorenz, former Ford Motor Co. executive with a background in nonautomotive transportation.

ALTHOUGH IT'S common knowledge in the county building that these three are being talked about, no one wants to talk on the record—or even off the record—about the situation.

It will take 14 votes to make the appointment, and the Republicans have 15 while the Democrats have only 12. Thus, the Republican caucus position of April 28 must be nearly unanimous to carry the GOP candidate over.

The appointment will be made under a law which takes effect tomorrow (April 15) restructuring the SEMTA board. On a 15-member board, there will be three Oakland residents. Two will be appointed by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) based on

nominations from the cities and townships bloc; the third will be the county board's choice.

Two Oakland residents currently serve on the SEMTA board under SEMCOG appointments and will be allowed to finish out their current terms. They are Joseph P. Bianco Jr., an investment banker from Bloomfield Hills, and Julie Evans, civic and political activist from Birmingham.

PAGE PROBABLY has the lead at the moment. He is a former Birmingham city commissioner and mayor with several terms on the county board to his credit.

And that's part of his problem. He already has an elected post; he's chairman of the influential general government committee on the county board; and he's a member of the very powerful finance committee, too.

Isn't that quite a lot of positions for a man who must earn his living? So whisper some Republicans, who don't want to hurt Page's feelings.

Hogan served on the Bloomfield Township board and two terms in the State House of Representatives. He has the ear of Gov. William G. Milliken and a long list of civic activities on his resume.

His strongest political point is his familiarity in and with many Oakland communities. He is a lawyer.

Lorenz, of Bloomfield Hills, was with Ford from 1959-76 and is a gener-

al director of Texas Instruments. At Ford, he was executive vice-president in charge of diversified products—tractors, industrial equipment, steel, glass, aeronautic consumer products and aerospace operations. At one point he was chairman and president of Ford of Europe.

Lorenz is a certified public accountant with an MBA degree. He boasts a "worldwide knowledge of what works and what doesn't work in the public transportation field."

OAKLAND'S THIRD SEMTA voice will miss the first meeting of the restructured board on April 19.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners must make its selection after April 15, and the earliest possible date is April 28.

The GOP caucus will precede the regular board meeting, which begins at 9:30 a.m.

The year 1977, above all others, is an important one for the SEMTA board. Before the year is out, the board will select which alternative rapid transit plan the metropolitan area will have for the next half-century.

The metropolitan area hasn't had a rapid transit system since the days of the interurban railway, a kind of fast, inter-city streetcar. Oddly enough, one of the leading candidates for a new transit system is called light rail and is a modernized version of the old interurban.

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Fashion Showtime: Northland: Informal show at 11-4 on Friday, April 15 with Fragments representative, Barbara Hochfield.

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