

Thursday, May 25, 1978

Silver Streak has SEMTA beaming

By TIM RICHARD

Even before the Silver Streak hit the tracks, ridership on SEMTA's commuter train from Pontiac to Detroit had begun to turn around.

"January was up 16 per cent over January of '77," said Larry Sals, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority. "February was up 32 per cent, March up 15.9 per cent and April up 38.4 per cent."

"I think there are three reasons."

"First, better cars and service. Silver Streak is no ordinary achievement. It's a major advancement for us—quieter, smoother, more comfortable ride. In the last six months, our service has been 50 per cent on time"—which he defined as within eight minutes of schedule.

"Second, the Renaissance Center has been a big market for us," he said, noting the train stops almost at the doorstep of the riverfront landmark.

"Third, advertising and promotion."

SILVER STREAK was actually inaugurated a month ago, but a formal dedication was held May 17. SEMTA Board Chairman Tom Turner and Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy broke a champagne bottle (Michigan-made) on the from of

Engine 904. Murphy, by the way, cut a finger.

For the first time, Murphy publicly suggested SEMTA run a spur from the line to the Pontiac Silverdome. "It's done all across the country," he said later in an interview. He and his chief aide, Patrick Nowak, said such a move would give RenCent hotel patrons an easy jaunt to the stadium without the hassle of traffic.

"It would get some of the drunks off the road and avoid tailgate parties," Nowak added.

SEMTA Vice-Chairman Henry M. Hogan said such a spur "is not a big capital item—\$100,000—and it could run from RenCent to the Super Bowl." Hogan, who doubles as chairman of the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau, is promoting bringing the pro football championship game to Silverdome.

SILVER STREAK represents about half of a \$5.2 million investment SEMTA has made in the commuter service on the Grand Trunk Western Railway line. It carries commuters from Pontiac, with stops in Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham and Royal Oak, to downtown Detroit in the morning and back again at night.

SEMTA owns the rolling stock and hires Grand Trunk to operate it under a "purchase of services" agreement.

Three trains carry about 800 persons daily, said Julian Wolfe, who manages the commuter service for SEMTA. That figure dips about 25 per cent in summer, he added.

HERE'S WHAT, over the past 2½ years and in the next year, SEMTA got for the 80-20 federal-state money:

- Purchase of four locomotives at \$357,000 and rehabilitation for \$34,000 for a total of \$391,000.

- Purchase of 12 Budd coaches for \$300,000 and rehabilitation for \$1.2 million for a total of \$1.5 million. They have new heating and cooling systems, upholstery, seats, floors, brakes and bearings. The exteriors have been painted silver with SEMTA's red and orange stripes.

- 17 other coaches for \$153,000 and renovation for \$50,000 for a total of \$203,000.

- Order of a fifth locomotive for \$306,000. This will enable SEMTA to place a fourth train on the line in fall and have one engine in reserve, said Sals.

- Three parking lots—land and improvements—in Birmingham.

Bloomfield Hills and Pontiac for \$500,000.

- Improvements in fixed facilities—yards, stations, platforms—for \$1.1 million.

The remainder is budgeted for engineering, miscellaneous and contingencies.

So far, only one train, the third, has a silver locomotive and cars, but the others will be added.

Once service on the Pontiac-Detroit line is improved and renovations completed, the next step will be restoring Arbor-Detroit service.

No mail delivery, on Memorial Day

There will be no delivery of mail, except special delivery and perishable items on Monday, May 29, Memorial Day.

All post office stations and branches will be closed, but self service postal centers will be open.

The regular holiday schedule of collections from street letter boxes will be made beginning at 3 p.m.

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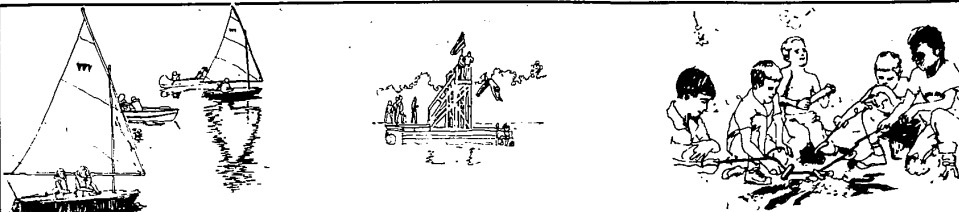
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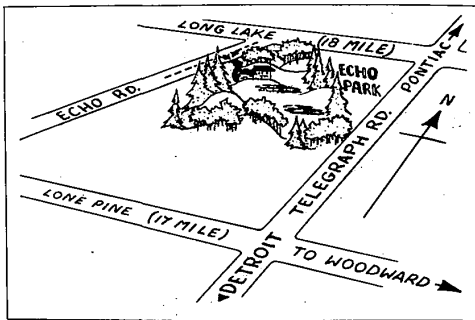


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