

# US tells Detroit: Subway would waste money

By TIM RICHARD

Federal officials are "skeptical" about southeastern Michigan's plans for an underground rapid transit line in Detroit.

Staff members and officials in the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) have told southeastern Michigan leaders that a program of mostly buses coupled with expansion of commuter rail service and a downtown people mover would be a better investment of federal funds.

The SEMTA board has set a self-imposed deadline of April 3 for its final selection of a 1980 transit plan.

Notes from a Jan. 18 meeting kept by Larry Salci, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, indicate subway supporters have little hope. UMTA Administrator Richard Page had four reasons why he thought subway rapid transit wasn't feasible.

Page made this case against the underground rapid transit proposal, according to Salci's notes:

"The region has failed to complete a merger of SEMTA and D-DOT, the De-

troit bus system. A single regional transit system was a requirement of both federal and state governments for continued funding.

"The region has failed to come up with adequate financing for its 20 percent share of the capital investment, estimated at \$200 million or more. A tri-county license plate tax yields only \$12.5 million per year.

"Federal money is limited. The subway plan Detroit Mayor Coleman Young hopes for would cost more than \$1 billion. The federal government in 1976 promised \$600 million of 80 percent federal funding. That would allow an \$800 million program, at most. In the Jan. 18, Page said UMTA wouldn't exceed its commitment, even with funds from a new transportation package.

"A subway plan just isn't a good investment in terms of benefits.

Salci reported: "Mr. Page said the UMTA staff had completed its evaluation and analysis of the draft environmental impact statement dealing with all of the economic, social and financial impacts of the various alternatives."

POLITICAL LEADERS have different interpretations of Page's remarks.

SEMTA Chairman Edward H. McNamara, mayor of Livonia, thinks the prospects for a subway are bleak. He cites opposition in the Michigan Legislature to funding such a billion dollar project and the SEMTA board's own inability to get 10 (of 15) votes for the project.

William Cilluffo, administrative assistant to Mayor Young, took Page's comments less seriously. He calls it "negotiating. Cilluffo leaves no doubt Young will go over the heads of UMTA to its ultimate bosses, Transportation Secretary Brock Adams and President Jimmy Carter."

SEMTA chief Salci told the board last week it should make its own decision on what transit alternative it wants and fight politically for it.

"Mr. Page said the UMTA staff had completed its evaluation and analysis of the draft environmental impact statement dealing with all of the economic, social and financial impacts of the various alternatives," Salci said. "Mr. Page said that it is the UMTA

staff's conclusion, based on their review of our program and comparison of our project with the other investment projects previously made and pending before UMTA, that UMTA is very 'skeptical' of a rail transit investment in metropolitan Detroit from the standpoint of transit benefits and payoff."

PAGE SAID "the UMTA staff's review had led them to believe that the best transit alternative is the bus-commuter rail-DPM (downtown people mover) alternative that would require approximately \$540 million (inflated) through 1980.

"Mr. Page said that alternative will provide almost as much patronage as the rail alternatives at half the cost.

"In addition, Mr. Page said UMTA would live up to its \$600 million level commitment which would mean that it would be willing to fund a number of additional candidate joint development projects in downtown Detroit. . .

"Mr. Page said this scenario would provide the best transit solution and at the same time meet the goals of urban revitalization and economic development benefits in Detroit at half the cost

of a rail alternative." Asked by Young's aide Cilluffo what criteria UMTA staffers had used in making that evaluation, Page replied: "The UMTA staff has concluded its analysis and measured the Detroit rail investment against existing rail starts and that criteria alone was a favorable factor in those decisions," according to Salci's notes.

Page cited several other metropolitan areas where a regional management structure and assured regional financing were in place. "Miami, Baltimore and Buffalo all have regional authorities with a local tax, something metropolitan Detroit has not achieved and that criteria alone was a favorable factor in those decisions," according to Salci's notes.



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# Stress snaps county GOP's hard line

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

The Republican caucus on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners disintegrated last week over the question of whether the party should dominate governmental appointments.

At the height of the furor, Robert Gorsline (R-Milford) angrily quit as chairman of the Republican caucus.

The GOP caucus split over the domination policy advocated by such leading veteran commissioners as Wallace Gabler (R-Royal Oak), Dennis Murphy (R-Novi), Paul Kasper (R-Bloomfield Hills) and Lillian Moffitt (R-Bloomfield Township).

Republicans, who hold an 16-11 majority, have weighted important board committees in their favor more heavily than have majority parties in the past. The GOP caucus also has replaced most Democrats with loyal Republicans on appointed boards and commissions, such as the county road commission and the parks and recreation commission.

The board's unhappy Democrats, in turn, forced party-line votes on most issues. Interparty relations hit a new low last week when a routine vote to approve the minutes of previous meeting resulted in a partisan vote.

THAT VOTE, coupled with the insistence of some Republican commissioners to continue ousting Democrats from appointed boards, led to the disintegration of the Republican caucus.

During a hastily-called recess of the commissioners' regular meeting, Caucus Chairman Gorsline resigned and denounced previous caucus

actions.

Gorsline said his decision to give up leadership of the party caucus was rooted in party decisions going back to December, when the Republicans initially adopted its hard-line approach to the minority party.

"I think we did the wrong thing," he said.

Gabler, the board chairman who at one time advocated the Republicans' hard-line approach, admitted the caucus had made a mistake.

"This is a hell of a way to run a railroad," Gabler said. "It just goes to show that if you holler for everything and grab for everything, you're going to get nothing," he said.

Former Republican caucus chairman John McDonald of Farmington agreed.

"All this goes back to the December caucus," he said. "We did things we never should have done like stacking all the committees."

McDonald had argued for giving Democratic commissioners a voice in this year's decision-making.

NOT ALL Republicans agreed they had done the "wrong thing."

"This is a situation that we're a partisan board," Kasper said. He said it was the responsibility of Republican commissioners to "carry forward the Republican philosophy in a county that is Republican."

"When you have the power with you," Kasper said, "you have to use it."

Board Democrats will dispute Kasper's claim that Oakland is a "Republican" county. Although hailing mainly from the southeastern corner of

the county, Democrats accounted for about 46 percent of the last votes cast in November's board of commissioners elections.

Democrats—some of whom refer to themselves as "the government in exile"—saw the majority party rift as something of a victory.

"It's the continuation of a past pattern," said Democratic Caucus Chairman Lawrence Pernick (D-Southfield). "There comes a time when the intellectually honest members of the Republican caucus have personally reached a point where they can't stomach the despotic rule."

"There is an established pattern," Pernick continued, "of a small, elite group taking away the rights and responsibility of duly-elected officials."

DESPITE SOME statements indicating that several Republicans were willing to bridge the chasm that has opened between the two parties, it is uncertain whether that bridge can be built in 1979.

Some commissioners say it is too late to undo the damage. "The die has been cast," said McDonald. "There aren't that many appointments left to be made."

He said it was unlikely that board committee structures and other appointments would be reconsidered.

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