

SEMTA chief nixes European transit model for Detroit

By TOM LONERGAN

Mention "suburban sprawl" to a European and you're likely to get a quizzical look, no matter what language you use.

"They have not allowed suburbanization at all," said Larry Salci, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA), who recently returned from a tour of several European cities.

Salci was the only Michigan representative among a group of 14 local and federal transportation officials who looked at urban transportation systems in Paris, London, Munich and smaller cities in Sweden and the Netherlands.

The group spent two days in each city riding subways and surface rail cars as well as reviewing how each system was funded and operated.

MODELING a Detroit area mass transit system after a European city's would be impractical due to "our suburbanization," said Salci, a Troy resident.

Transportation and land use are

"closely interwoven" in European cities, he said. "We really don't have an adopted land use plan that really means anything."

The automobile brought great individual mobility and suburbanization to U.S. cities, Salci said, but also "haphazard land development."

European cities are "still the centers of government," Salci said, and don't have the "same political problems and fragmented self-interests" of their U.S. counterparts.

Most European countries "cut back the auto penetration of the city" 10 years ago, he added. "If you're in the city, you take transit."

"If you want to go through the city, you have to go around."

He said between 20 and 30 percent of all people who travel to downtown Detroit do so by bus or commuter rail, in European cities, he said up to 80 percent use mass transit to get to the central city.

EUROPEANS USE cars for "specialty trips" and on weekends, Salci said. Gasoline is \$3 a gallon in Paris, \$2.50 in Germany and "better than \$2 every-

where else," he said. With those prices, Europeans have "very little sympathy for our energy situation," he added.

The change in transportation emphasis this country faces due to rapidly increasing gas prices and supply shortages has been met by European countries during the last 20 years, Salci said.

He estimated most European coun-

tries split their transportation spending evenly between highways and mass transit, while the U.S. government has spent 90 percent on highways.

Salci said interstate highway development was "a great policy when energy was very cheap."

SALCI APPLAUDED the Carter Administration's proposal to spend \$10 billion more on mass transit develop-

ment during the next 10 years. He said it would increase federal mass transit spending to \$4.4 billion a year.

SEMTA now gets \$30 million annually in federal funds for operating costs and another \$30 million for capital investment. Purchase of 180 new buses during the past year cost \$20 million, Salci said.

Federal mass transit policy during the next five years emphasizes replace-

ment of the "rolling stock" of 30,000 buses nationwide, Salci said.

He noted the European countries he visited are "far, far ahead" of the U.S. in bus and rail technology. Salci said the U.S. has two bus manufacturers and one rail car manufacturer.

"Nothing's going to change overnight," Salci said regarding quicker U.S. development of urban mass transit.

County road crew ratifies 7% pay pact

A three-year contract, providing a 7 percent wage increase the first year, was recently approved by road maintenance workers who struck the Oakland County Road Commission earlier this month.

The new pact will cost the road commission \$2.2 million over three years, said a commission spokesman.

The 280 members of Local 92 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees walked off their jobs for five days during the first week in July after the road commission,

refused to extend all the terms of a previous contract which expired June 30.

BILL BURLING, chief negotiator for the union, said the new contract was approved by two-thirds of the membership, but couldn't provide the vote tally.

According to the road commission, the contract increases the average hourly wage for bargaining unit members, which include janitors, electricians, repairmen and mechanics, to \$9.78, assuming the full cost-of-living (COLA)

increase of 30 cents an hour takes effect during the last year of the contract.

The average under the previous contract was \$7.81. The new contract maintains pay differentials among the various jobs, with electricians and mechanics making \$2 per hour more than janitors, who are on the low end of the wage scale.

Burling said the road workers got a 50 cents an hour across-the-board increase (7 percent) the first year of the contract, retroactive to July 1; will

receive a 60 cent increase (8 percent) across the board next July 1 and another 50 cents (8 percent) on July 1, 1981, plus any COLA increase the last year.

The previous three-year contract had applied cost of living increases each year.

An optical insurance plan also takes effect during the last year of the agreement.

The road commission has not reached agreement with 130 salaried employees represented by AFSCME Local 529.



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