

# Service unaffected despite short till

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) expects at least \$28.2 million in state gas tax money to find its way into its current budget.

Although the amount is \$2.3 million less than originally budgeted, the regional transportation authority won't have to cut service, according to General Manager Larry E. Salci.

But next year, which for SEMTA's budget purposes begins on July 1, could be a different story.

"Come next year if there's not a new source of revenue at the state level and our local tax is not restored, we're going to be drastically cutting service," Salci told the SEMTA board of directors last week.

State and federal funds provide the majority of SEMTA's \$100.8 million operating budget for fiscal 1981.

**THE TWO BIG** its regarding future state money for SEMTA includes a restructuring of the state gas and weight tax and continuation of special vehicle registration and title transfer taxes collected only in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties.

Attorney General Frank Kelley declared the regional tax unconstitutional last July. SEMTA, with annual revenues of nearly \$13.4 million at stake, challenged the ruling in the Michigan Court of Appeals, which has yet to reach a decision.

Even though the Secretary of State's office has been under a court order to continue collecting the extra \$2.50 for plates and \$8 per vehicle title transferred in the three county area, money has been withheld from SEMTA since last summer. It's in an interest bearing escrow account pending the appeals court decision.

Due to smaller, fuel-saving cars and less total vehicle miles traveled, state gas and weight tax revenues are down. The tax, which was increased two cents at the pump in 1978, primarily funds county road commissions for maintenance of state highways.

A little more than 8 percent of the gas tax revenues go to regional transportation authorities and rail passenger service state-wide. SEMTA is guaranteed a 21 percent share of this pie, which has been shrinking.

According to a Michigan Department of Transportation spokesman, \$56.3 million in gas tax revenues was raised for mass transit as of Sept. 30, the end of the state's budget year. That's 4 percent lower than the previous year.

The gas and weight tax fund overall was down nearly 11 percent, the spokesman said. Mass transit is also funded partially through the state sales tax on auto-related products.

STATE LEGISLATORS are expected to consider a new taxing formula next year for roads and mass transportation that would be pegged to increasing fuel prices rather than the current flat 11 cents per gallon.

Legislators, who received a no tax increase message from voters at the Nov. 4 election, aren't expected to embrace any new proposals with open arms.

Salci said: "Mentioning the word tax in the hallways of Lansing, you're a candidate to be knocked off."

Salci said if the regional tax is not restored, SEMTA may have to borrow in March to keep operating.

"We could have some cost problems ... maintaining payroll and things of that nature," he said he has already contacted three major Detroit area banks regarding possible borrowing.

## Deaf can use tele-typewriter

Deaf persons now have telephone access at the state Education Department's Rehabilitation Service office in Livonia.

Frank Jablonsky, assistant district supervisor, said they can use a telephonic device at the deaf (TDD), also known as a tele-typewriter.

A hearing-impaired person who visits the office at 27437 W. Six Mile can use the state's leased line to make toll-free calls to 800 numbers in such TDD-equipped agencies as the U.S. Office of Civil Rights.

Sixteen Michigan Rehabilitation Service offices are equipped with TDDs, Jablonsky said.

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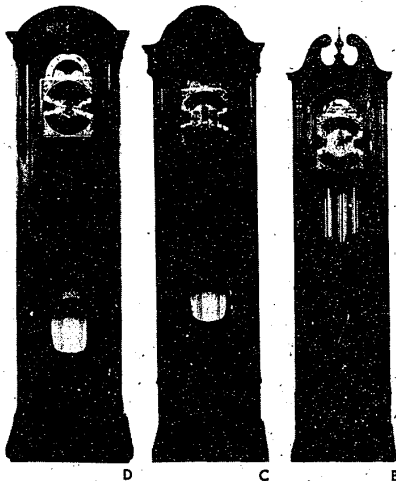
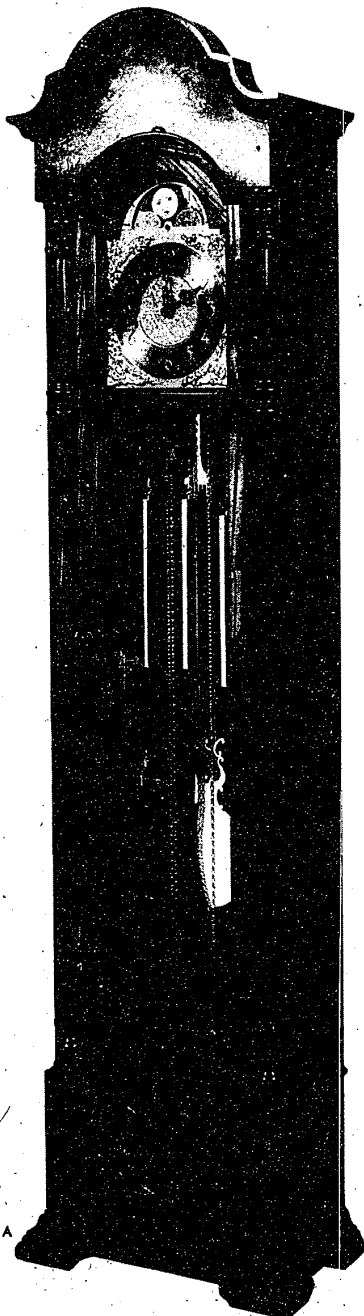
B. Regularly \$1499. Cherry cabinet with baby lyre pendulum, moon dial, Westminster, St. Michael and Whittington chimes. 80" high.

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C. Regularly \$1899. Ash with olive burl trim cabinet, big lyre pendulum, moon dial, Westminster, St. Michael and Whittington chimes. Features seconds, date, day and month dials. 80" high.

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