

**'\$600 million is all'**

**SEMTA to 'downsize' plans**

By Mike Scanlon  
staff writer

SEMTA General Manager Larry Salci, predicting that southeast Michigan can't count on any more federal transit aid, wants his board of directors to study four cheaper, "downsized" alternatives to the controversial, \$1.2 billion transit plan it approved in 1979.

"They haven't put it in writing," said Salci of Reagan administrators Tuesday. "But they've told us 19 different ways. \$600 million is all you get."

The \$600 million in federal transit aid was promised in 1976 to the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority by the Ford Administration. After early reluctance, the Reagan Administration has continued to fund system development.

"WE'RE STARTING to get started on the basics of what's available," said board member Paul Kasper, Bloomfield Hills, a staunch subway opponent who is an Oakland County commissioner.

"It looks at the moment like we could be back to an all-bus system," said Edward McNamara, mayor of Livonia.

SEMTA administrators said researching the effects of the four al-

ternate plans would likely take five months.

**SALCI'S ALTERNATIVES** would all continue heavy reliance on large, line-haul buses for the bulk of commuters. But all the plans would trim other elements of the transit system — especially the Woodward corridor light rail subway.

Some alternatives would also eliminate or impose long delays on certain proposed commuter train lines from Ann Arbor, Pontiac and Mt. Clemens.

Probably the biggest impact on suburban residents of the downsizing, however, would be Salci's suggestion to trim the eventual number of small buses — modified van-like vehicles — from 444 to about 340. There are 275 of the high-operating-cost vehicles in use now.

But most of the other savings were concentrated on the Woodward corridor. Under each plan, the railroad of the subway line would be a revamped railroad maintenance yard near I-75 at Mack. There are few other similarities.

**THE MOST DRASTIC** — and expensive — of the four alternative plans includes an all-subway rail line that would run a U-shaped route from the Mack yard south to downtown, then

north on Woodward to Warren, the southern tip of the Wayne State University campus. The line, featuring a subway less than three miles long in a light rail system that would be just five miles long, would cost an estimated \$465 million to build.

Slightly more expensive would be a 6.1 mile system with equal combinations of subway and surface-level light rail. It would cost \$485 million and would end at Grand Boulevard, about a mile north of the first alternative.

A third alternative would extend the elevated, \$127 million downtown people mover north on Woodward from Grand Circus Park to the Sears store in Highland Park, a distance of about 7.7 miles at an estimated cost of \$460 million. That estimated cost figure was developed by the company which is building the downtown people mover, not by

SEMTA.

Some board members found the option of extending the people mover surprisingly expensive — it would cost \$2 million more than the heavily-underground line, although the people mover system would stretch some 2.7 miles farther.

Salci said people mover tracks have a "hot" third rail carrying electricity, and have to be "segregated from vehicular and pedestrian traffic."

The segregation comes from elevating the rail line, which requires supporting columns every 80 feet. Salci said nearly every column will involve expensive re-routing of utility lines.

**THE FOURTH** alternative was basically a trolley, a ground-level light rail line from the maintenance yard to McNichols (Six Mile) Road.

**Transit board 2nd spot snarls vote**

Detroit SEMTA board members turned down R.J. Alexander's bid

Tuesday for re-election as board chairman — but they tried to be nice about it.

"The ironic thing about it is we really have no beef with the chairman," said Michael Einheuser, an aide to Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

"Because of the way this thing is being played, it'll be Detroit versus the chairman, and that's not the way it is."

Detroit members said they were concerned about the "line of succession" to the chairmanship. What bothered them was Dewitt Henry's nomination as first vice-chair. Henry is a suburban Wayne County member.

An 8-4 vote failed to return Alexander, of Bloomfield Township, to office because he headed at least 10 votes to win under board bylaws.

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