

Every route affected by SEMTA bus cuts

By Tim Richard
staff writer

It's becoming clear that senior citizens will put the heat on SEMTA to maintain bus services. But will they campaign for a yes vote for a tax increase to pay for them?

That question faces officials of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority as they puzzle out how to cut services and/or raise new revenue.

"I've been at SEMTA five years and have been part of expanding service. I don't enjoy cutting," Don Dirks, coordinator of community relations, said at a public hearing last week in Dearborn.

That audience was dominated by senior citizens with a scattering of the handicapped and a couple of college students.

"We have raised fares approximately once a year. The most the market will bear is once a year and the amount of inflation," Dirks said when asked why fares couldn't be hiked instead of services cut or taxes raised.

SEMTA'S PLANS are indefinite, but the seven-county transit agency has known for a long time it would need a new infusion of revenue beginning this

year.

Reason No. 1, according to Acting General Manager Gary Krause's charts, is that federal Urban Mass Transit Administration grants will be phased out. UMTA gave SEMTA \$41 million in fiscal last year, intends to give \$31 million this year, and is expected to grant \$19 million in '83, \$8 million in '84 and nothing after that.

Reason No. 2, said Krause, is that \$16 million of tri-county license fee revenue has been tied up in an escrow account because of a lawsuit filed by the Oakland County Road Commission. OCRC has fought SEMTA funding and transit planning politically for years.

SO THE TRANSIT authority has taken two steps to cut expenses.

Early in January, it cut \$2.3 million in downtown office operations, said Krause. These included "freezing staff positions, reducing funds for advertising, consultants, travel, meetings, supplies, equipment; also included was postponement of small bus expansion scheduled for January through June and the cancellation of an extra train that served Birmingham and Royal Oak in the early afternoons." Dirks added that central office staffers are

working an additional half-hour a day without compensation.

On Feb. 15 the SEMTA board will consider \$3.7 million in cuts. Nine routes may be dropped, virtually every other route will receive less service, and some routes will lose weekend service. The cuts would take effect in March.

Last week's public hearing in Dearborn and the Oakland County hearings this week are about those cuts.

HEARINGS were held Monday evening in Royal Oak, Tuesday afternoon in Southfield, Tuesday evening in the Oakland County Commissioners Auditorium, and Wednesday in West Bloomfield Township.

Another hearing is at 7:30 tonight in room 221-222 of Southfield's Parks and

Recreation Building, 26000 Evergreen.

Next week there's a hearing at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 2 in the Troy Community Center, 520 W. Big Beaver.

They'll follow the same format: a presentation by a SEMTA official of the budget problem, questions and comments from the audience, then answers to the questions.

Person unable to attend a hearing may mail comments to: SEMTA public hearing, Box 333, Detroit 48231.

Here are the proposed cuts by route: 410 Southfield-Greenfield-Detroit — Reduce one round trip on weekdays.

420 Southfield-Greenfield-Detroit — Eliminate entirely. Riders would have to rely on routes 410, 710/715.

440/450/460 Woodward local — Reduce midday weekday and Saturday service; reduce Sunday service in Win-

ter.

445 Woodward limited — Reduce weekday service.

455/465 Woodward limited — Reduce weekday service; eliminate all Pontiac and Adams Road limited service.

480 Farmington Hills-Northland-Detroit — Eliminate weekday midday service; reduce service from Northland to Orchard Mall; eliminate Saturday service.

485 Hunter's Ridge — Reduce weekday service by two round trips; keep one trip only on Saturday.

490 Rochester-Campbell roads — Eliminate midday service.

495 Rochester-Campbell roads — Reduce service to Royal Oak.

495 John R. — Eliminate service to Royal Oak; reduce evening and Saturday service.

day service.

710/715 Nine Mile — Eliminate weekday evening service; reduce Saturday service; eliminate Sunday service.

740 Twelve Mile — Reduce by two round trips and shorten service by two hours.

842 Park & Ride from Rochester-Troy-Detroit — Eliminate all service.

850 Park & Ride from Birmingham-Southfield-Detroit — Reduce by one round trip.

851 Park & Ride from West Bloomfield-Farmington Hills-Detroit — Reduce by one round trip.

Commuter train — Eliminate one round trip, leaving three trips in morning, three in afternoon.

Commuter rail feeder and shuttle service — Reduce service in accordance with reduced train service.

Train bus (alternative to train) — eliminate.

Connector (small bus) — No expansion, as planned; reduce evening and weekend service.

Race track — Eliminate harness season trips.

State to hold transportation needs hearing

"The future of Michigan's transportation will be the subject of a public meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28, in the Community Arts Auditorium at the State Fairgrounds, Woodward south of Eight Mile in Detroit.

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