

Senior citizens will get new break with tax fares

A popular northwest Wayne County subsidized taxi cab program which was in danger of being dropped because of budget problems will continue to operate under new guidelines.

Beginning Monday, a \$4 per trip fare rate ceiling will go into effect for the program, which provides transportation service for more than 5,700 senior and handicapped residents each month in Livonia, Northville, Northville Township, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The more than 1,700 riders who share their trips with other eligible passengers will not be affected by the new rate structure. All shared rides are exempt from the \$4 fare ceiling.

"Under the new rate structure, senior and handicapped citizens will continue to pay 75 cents per trip for taxi

rides up to \$4. Beyond the ceiling, however, riders will have to pay the entire cost beyond the \$4. For example, if the taxi fare totals \$5.50, the rider will pay 75 cents for the fare up to \$4, plus \$1.50, the entire cost beyond the \$4, for a total of \$2.25," said Gary Krause, acting general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA).

The \$4 fare rate ceiling will allow passengers to travel approximately three miles for 75 cents. Alternate service, however, is available via the SEMTA Connector small bus service for those individuals who need to make longer trips and wish to forego paying the additional taxi fares beyond the \$4 ceiling," he explained.

The subsidized taxi cab program, which is coordinated by the city of Livonia, began operating in northwest

Wayne County in 1979. Under the program, senior citizens, 65 years of age and older, and handicapped citizens use a local taxi cab service for transportation but pay the equivalent SEMTA small bus fare instead of regular taxi rates. SEMTA pays the taxi cab company the difference between the regular cab fare and the small bus fare.

"Ridership on the taxi cab program has been greater than we anticipated, and funds are being used up more rapidly than budgeted," said Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara.

"In fiscal year 1982, a total of \$207,000 was budgeted to operate the program in northwest Wayne County. Currently an average of \$22,120 per month is being used to subsidize the program, approximately \$5,000 over the \$17,250 per month budgeted for the program. At the present rate of ex-

penditure, the budget for the program would have been exhausted in nine months," he explained.

Several alternatives were considered to bring costs down and allow the program to continue, including confining taxi cab trips to municipal boundaries.

"While confining the trips to municipal limits was feasible, the alternative was not equitable," said McNamara.

"Some areas are so large, like 36-square-mile Livonia, that individual trips costing \$8 are not uncommon. Conversely, some communities in the program, such as Northville, are so small that they rely heavily on resources and services outside of their city boundaries.

"Placing a ceiling on fare rates per trip permits the individual to make the decision to pay the extra cost for the longer trip, or to use the SEMTA Con-

necter, a curb-to-curb small bus system," he explained.

As part of the effort to balance the subsidized taxi cab program budget, taxi service will no longer be provided to Livonia Mall from three senior citizen residential complexes — Brashear Towers, McNamara Towers and Ziegler Place. Alternate transportation, however, is available weekdays between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. for the more than 600 residents of the three Livonia senior citizen complexes via SEMTA Connector small bus service.

Since Jan. 25, SEMTA Connector service has been providing small bus service from Brashear Towers at 9:25 a.m., 10:25 a.m., 2:25 p.m. and 5:25 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Service is also provided five times a day on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from McNamara Towers to Livonia Mall and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from Ziegler Place. Buses leave

McNamara Towers at 8:50 a.m., 9:50 a.m., 10:50 a.m., 2:50 p.m. and 5:50 p.m. Connector buses leave Ziegler Place at 8:50 a.m., 9:50 a.m., 10:50 a.m., 2:50 p.m. and 5:50 p.m.

Advance reservations are not necessary for travel from the three senior citizen residential complexes to Livonia Mall or for reverse travel. Seniors, 65 years of age and over, and handicapped people pay 35 cent per trip. Full fare for the general public is 75 cents per trip.

For schedule information and/or special reservations for SEMTA Connector small bus service in Livonia, Plymouth or Northville, call 425-7373; Farmington residents can call 348-9220.

For information regarding SEMTA large bus schedules, call toll-free 462-5161. For D-DOT schedule information, call 933-1300.

Drunk drivers fought

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LEE AND SUE LANDES of Livonia have spearheaded efforts to implement local laws of MADD since losing their son to a drunk driver last October.

"Since we decided to take the lead, we've seen a swelling up of concern," said Lee Landes. "There is tremendous support. People are angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn."

Locally, MADD will push for mandatory minimum sentences for drunk drivers and for the election of judges, legislators and prosecutors who will recognize and work on the problem.

Court monitoring to keep track of sentencing by judges also will be undertaken by area MADD groups.

Lt. Ernest Miller of the Farmington Hills Police attended the Kelly

and Co. show Tuesday. He said a local chapter of MADD could accomplish plenty.

Miller last year initiated a plan to combat drunk driving where warrants are sought from the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office for second- and third-time offenders. Although he is unable to say whether his tactics are taking drinks off the roads, they are complicating plea bargaining for drunk drivers, Miller claims.

"We can get drunk drivers to court, but police officers become very frustrated when they are let off," said Miller. "Sentencing is out of our hands."

Locally, MADD could put direct pressure on legislators, local and county officials and on the judicial system to place more emphasis on tougher laws for drunk drivers."

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