

Transportation dropped from state tax hike plan

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Some \$132 million in new income tax money for transportation has been dropped from the budget crisis agenda by legislative leaders and Gov. Milliken.

"It's a disappointment," said Gary Krause, new general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority. But road interests were elated.

"The transportation people were divided," Milliken said last week in a news conference after his announcement in a speech to the Michigan Municipal League. "They should have had their act together."

Milliken on March 10 proposed \$451 million in state budget cuts and a 0.7 percent increase in the state income

tax. Of that, 0.3 was to go to all transportation — state, county and local roads and public transportation.

MILLIKEN spoke to the Municipal League luncheon in Lansing only a short time after a morning negotiating session with legislative leaders of both parties.

"We reached preliminary agreement, first, to act on the proposals before the Easter recess on April 8 and, second, to separate the issue of transportation financing," he announced.

The governor added that legislators had three major problems to deal with — the deficits, the cash flow and school aid — and didn't want to take on transportation, too.

Doug Roberts, deputy director of the budget, shed more light on the battle a few minutes later. "The road interests

did not like the income tax increase because it would not be earmarked 90-10 for roads," he said.

In contrast, the state transportation fund — supported by declining gasoline and weight taxes — is earmarked so that not more than 10 percent can be allocated to public transportation.

ROAD BUILDERS and road commissions, such as Oakland County's, had asked Milliken to withdraw the proposed income tax increase for transportation.

They felt that because income taxes go into the general fund, they would have to fight their way through the legislative process to get appropriations in future years, according to one legislative source.

Road interests prefer a package of bills in the House Taxation Committee

which would raise gasoline and weight taxes, earmarking them for the transportation fund.

Milliken's agreement with legislators that transportation would be dropped from the income tax package does not rule out raising the income tax as a form of transportation funding later in the year.

BUT SEMTA's Krause doubted it. "I would question the Legislature's ability to go twice on that issue (raising the income tax)," he said in an interview.

And so the odds are that the gasoline-weight taxes will be the tool for increasing the transportation fund.

SEMTA this year is seeking a tax increase — either local or state — to replace federal operating subsidies which are being phased out by the Reagan administration.

Nevertheless, Krause saw two good points coming out of the federal government's moves.

"While the feds talk about withdrawing from operating costs because they don't want to be involved in our labor contracts, they've also talked about increasing capital contributions from 80 percent to 90 percent of project cost," he said.

And the SEMTA chief was pleased at U.S. Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis's recent proposal to raise the federal gasoline tax five cents a gallon — four cents for highways and one cent for public transit.

KRAUSE SAID the Reagan philosophy would be good news to supporters of rail rapid transit — a point of hot controversy in southeast Michigan.

He called SEMTA's rapid transit

plan "consistent with the philosophy of increasing capital dollars and lowering operating and maintenance costs."

SEMTA's figures show that a major investment in a fixed, partly underground rail line would result in lower fuel and operating costs.

"That makes good economic sense from a conservative viewpoint," he said.

In southeast Michigan, however, conservative politicians have tended to oppose an underground rapid transit line as a pet of Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

MEANWHILE, the Michigan Department of Transportation announced that revenue reductions will mean cutbacks in three state-subsidized bus lines.

MDOT Director John P. Woodford blamed the reductions on state revenue reductions of \$285,000.



David F. Breck elevated

Milliken names Breck to circuit court bench

David F. Breck, 51, a district judge in Birmingham-Bloomfield since 1977, has been elevated to the Oakland Circuit Court effective April 2 by Gov. Milliken.

Breck will succeed Judge Robert Webster, who resigned. Breck will be eligible to run for a new six-year term Nov. 8, according to Milliken's announcement.

The circuit court is a countywide court of general jurisdiction, including major civil and criminal cases.

Breck's political career began in 1963 with his election to the Birmingham City Commission. The commission elected him mayor several times. He was instrumental in passing and implementing one of Michigan's first open

housing ordinances. In that period, he was active in the Birmingham-Bloomfield Human Relations Council.

For seven years, Breck was also a director and chairman of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

After attending Cranbrook School, he earned a BA at Michigan State University and a law degree from the University of Michigan. He belongs to several professional associations and served as president of the Oakland County chapter of the American Trial Lawyers Association.

Breck resigned from the city commission Jan. 1, 1977, when he was appointed district judge. He was elected to a full term in 1978.

Cycle safety classes open

Oakland Community College is sponsoring motorcycle safety courses, 5:30-9:30 p.m. twice a week at the Orchard Ridge Campus, Orchard Lake Road at I-696, Farmington Hills.

Classes will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays from April 12 to May 10; Tuesdays and Thursdays from April 13 to May 11; Mondays and Wednesdays from May 17 to June 16; and Tuesdays and Thursdays from May 18 to June 15.

Although motorcycles are provided, students must furnish their own helmets, boots, gloves, arm

protectors and rain gear if necessary. A \$25 fee will be charged.

Weekend classes will be held on April 23 and 24; April 30, May 1 and 2; June 4 and 5 and June 11, 12 and 13. Friday evening classes will meet 6-10 p.m. Staturday morning sessions will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday they will run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For registration, call the Orchard Ridge campus at 476-9400, Ext. 212.

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