

# SEMTA critics zero in on Krause

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

"I wouldn't have that job for anything," said a friend of Gary Krause, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

"It's like being a fire hydrant and having a million dogs around you."

And it's true that Krause had to be persuaded to take the SEMTA top operating post a year and a half ago. The 15-member SEMTA board deadlocked politically on a replacement for the popular Larry Salei and made Krause, then its chief of planning, acting general manager.

Krause refused to seek for the top job, and finally the board simply awarded him the hot seat. First, early in 1982 he went through an agonizing 20-percent budget cut when federal operating aid was cut and some state funds were tied up in court.

AND IN THE last two weeks, Krause has been fielding questions — not all friendly — during public hearings on SEMTA's revised 1990 public transit plan. But he always has a load of facts committed to memory.

Sometimes he finds himself in a "damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't" position. Consider the question of Oakland County Commissioner Lillian Moffitt, R-Bloomfield Township, who complained there were inadequate cost figures.

"We are hesitant to develop cost data in great detail when the purpose (of a public hearing) is to get public comment on the concept," Krause replied. "If we provide too much detail, we are

accused of having it all laid out and not listening to the public."

Krause declines to answer questions during the course of the hearing because the SEMTA board wants to take as much public comment as possible. So by the time the general manager gets to answer when the public has finished, it's so late in the day that most people — particularly critics — have gone home.

MOST CRITICS equate SEMTA's light-rail rapid transit plan with Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, the embodiment of evil in many suburban minds, and Krause catches the brunt of it.

Krause agrees with the Reagan administration — he describes his own political philosophy as "conservative" — that federal funds are best spent on capital goods such as interstate freeways, airports and light-rail transit — and that "the health of a public transit system should be up to the metropolitan area."

In that framework, he says, it makes sense to have a high-capital light-rail line for which the federal government pays 80 percent of the cost, but which costs relatively less to operate.

On the other hand, he added, a system totally dependent on buses — which many rail critics favor — would receive no federal operating money and require better local subsidies.

OTHER SAMPLE questions and answers:

Q. You keep saying ours is the only major region which doesn't have a dedicated tax source for transit. Didn't Houston just defeat a proposal?

A. No, Houston has a dedicated one-cent sales tax for operations and still has it. Defeated was a plan to pledge part of it for capital.

Q. Wouldn't small buses be cheaper to operate than those big monsters that carry only a handful of passengers?

A. SEMTA has the largest small bus system in North America... Large buses are full during the morning and evening commute period. But after the commute is over, those large buses are not effectively used," he admitted.

The driver of a large bus, however, cannot be

shifted to a small bus because there are federal and state laws prohibiting it. Drivers of large and small buses are represented by different unions.

Even if drivers could be shifted to small buses during midday hours, there wouldn't be enough small buses available.

Q. QUIT BEING stuck on tired old ideas and consider some fresh new ones. Rather than all these buses, why not subsidize taxi service for people who really need it?

A. SEMTA is allowed to turn over part of its money to communities for local services, and some see fit to subsidize taxis. Added Dewitt Henry, SEMTA board chairman: "We've looked at ridesharing, we've looked at monorail, we've looked at taxicabs."

Q. SEMTA charges senior citizens half fare, but I see people in some communities riding for nothing. Why these freebies?

A. Same answer — some cities use their funds to subsidize senior citizen fares.

Q. Look, what we want to know is how much you're going to ask for in a tax?

A. The Michigan Legislature has to decide what to put on the ballot because SEMTA has no authority of its own to levy a tax. And the Legislature hasn't taken up the issue yet.



Gary Krause taking the brunt

Thursday, July 21, 1983 O&E

(O&E)

## AGORAPHOBIA

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- FEAR of waiting in lines
- FEAR of going far from home
- FEAR of social situations
- FEAR of crowded public places (streets, stores, restaurants)
- FEAR of shopping malls or large stores
- FEAR of being trapped
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According to the "thermometer" Detroit Edison Co. uses to measure customer use, the people of southeastern Michigan are using record amounts of electricity in air conditioners and fans.

Edison records indicate that at 3 p.m. Friday, its plants were producing 7,067,000 kilowatts of electricity to meet the needs of customers' homes, businesses and industry.

Demand usually tapers off as offices and industrial plants complete their week's work. Friday was the fourth day this summer that customer use topped the highest level reached last year.

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