SEMTA critics zero in on Krause

"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 bydrant and having a million dogs around you."

"It's like being a fire bydrant 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 Is-member SEMTA board deadlocked politically on a replacement for the popular Larry Salet 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, carly in 1992 he went through an agonizing 20-percent budget cut when federal operating ald 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 "dammed-if-you-do," dammed-if-you-do, dammed-if-you-don't position. Consider the question of Oakland County Commissioner Lillian Moffitt, R. Bloomfield Township, who complained there were inadequate cost figures. taking the brunt

"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 re-plied. "If we provide too much detail, we are

Just how hot was it?

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 7,057,000 kilowatts of electricity to meet the needs of customers' homes, businesses and industry.

Edison readies kilowatts to beat the heat

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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 bett 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."

of a public transit system should be up to the met-ropolitan area.*

In that framework, he says, it makes sense to have a high-capital light-rall line for which the fed-eral 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 fa-tor— would receive no federal operating money and require heftier local subsidies.

and require hetter 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 floutson 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 passegger?

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 commette is over, those large buses are not effectively used," he admitted.

The driver of a large bus, however, cannot be

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. Friday's production record is the highest reached on the Detroit Edison system since July 9, 1981, according to Robert V. Nicolson, assistant vice president and manager of the company's electrical system.

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 sinck on tired old ideas and consider some fresh new ones. Rather than all these buses, why not subsidies 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'n looked at monorall, we've looked at taxicabs."

O. SEMTA charges senior spitters, but the service of the service of the service senior service se

looked at faricabs.

Q. SEMTA charge scalor citizens half fare, but I see people in some communities riding for nothing. Why these freebles?

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 taxes?

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



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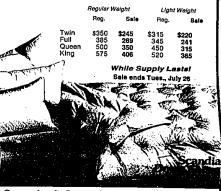
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