

# Students losing SEMTA service

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

Students who use public transportation to get to school will be paying extra to ride more crowded buses — if they can catch any at all.

Proposed Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) cuts would reduce the number of buses serving area high school and college students.

Service would be stopped to Oakland University and Oakland Community College Auburn Heights campus. Fewer lines would serve Wayne State University.

Despite fewer choices of runs and more people riding along with them, youth are expected to pay 75 cents instead of the 50 cents they now put in the farebox.

"We tried very hard to retain as much school service as possible," said Lori Lysett, SEMTA's manager of schedules, service evaluation and communications.

"MANY STUDENTS ARE very transit dependent. And for many people, the only time they use public transit is when they are in school."

SEMTA's \$16 million deficit forced it to propose cuts effective Oct. 1. The proposal would eliminate the commuter rail from Pontiac to downtown Detroit, drop from 287 to 188 large buses, and reduce the number of small buses from 148 to 98.

A public hearing on the reductions is set for 10:30 a.m. Monday in the Veterans Memorial Building, Detroit. The SEMTA board of directors will act on the proposal Sept. 20.

Efforts were made to continue service to all school districts that rely on public transportation, Lysett said.

IN OAKLAND COUNTY, the "non-contracted school service" is used most by Berkley and Royal Oak students who ride SEMTA buses to parochial schools and public high schools. They ride down main roads like Woodward on buses open to the public.

SEMTA would reduce the number of

runs in Royal Oak. All Berkley runs would remain.

Many young riders also travel Woodward to Shrine High School in Royal Oak and to Roper City and Country School in Bloomfield Hills. They would still get service, minus an extra bus added for them.

But they may be a bit crowded, depending on how many former train riders join them.

"Woodward service will be kept, especially with the commuter rail being eliminated. But the buses will be more crowded, with more people standing."

NO ADULT FARE increases are planned, since SEMTA believes increases would put bus service out of the reach of people below middle income.

The only suggested fare increase would be a 25-cent increase in youth fares, upping the basic rate for two zones from 50 cents to 75 cents.

SEMTA believes the increase would make it possible to keep school routes that would otherwise be cut because they are not profitable.

College students who attend Wayne State University mainly use SEMTA buses from the Croose Pointes, Oakland County west of Woodward (Oak Park, Southfield, Berkley, Huntington Woods), and along the Woodward corridor.

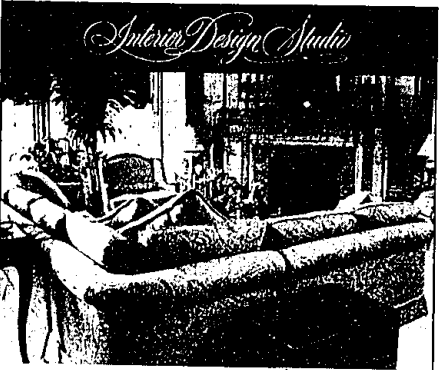
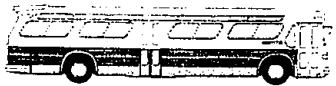
LIKE OTHER TRAVELERS, they would get reduced service but still would have access to the university.

But Oakland University and Oakland Community College — which are not on main bus routes — would lose SEMTA service. Now, there are hourly trips from Pontiac to OU and the neighboring Auburn Heights campus of OCC.

"These schools are commuter colleges and, by and large, students arrange auto travel before they even enroll. So we usually serve just those who lose their transportation."

"So, from our standpoint, it's not a very stable ridership."

Some OCC Farmington Hills students travel to the school by connector bus, which also could be cut back.



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