

Can new plan spark action?

BY WAYNE PEAL
STAFF WRITER

Can Keith Butler steer Detroit into a transportation merger with the suburban-based SMART bus service?

Long-frustrated SMART officials are guardedly optimistic about the city councilman's plan.

"We're just grateful someone has decided to take the lead and get this thing moving," SMART chairman Matt Wirgau said.

SMART officials have long been frustrated in their attempts to merge with the Detroit Department of Transportation.

There are differences between Butler's plan and that proposed by SMART officials, particularly in the apportionment of delegates to a new, regional governing board.

SMART and Detroit officials have been at odds over whether the city or suburbs should have the

TRANSIT

largest number of delegates.

Butler's plan would divide delegates 50/50, though there would be an additional board member confirmed by a board majority.

"The biggest obstacle, however, could lie with other Detroit council members."

"He's going to have to get a majority before anything can happen," Wirgau said.

At present, merger talks are on hold.

Also on hold — at least for now — is SMART's plan for a regional transportation tax.

Permission would have to be granted from the state Legislature before the first-of-its-kind tax could be placed on the ballot.

But Wirgau said advance lobbying isn't occurring.

"We're not going to the Legislature unless the plan is pretty well concrete," he said.

The tax would likely be levied in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

Livingston and St. Clair counties, marginally part of the SMART system today, have indicated there weren't interested in expanded services, Wirgau said.

Butler had indicated he sought a system that included both, as well as Monroe County.

SMART has expressed interest in a sales tax increase, but voters likely won't have the final say this year.

"It's not too late for the fall ballot, but things would have to move awfully quickly for that to happen," Wirgau said. "It's more likely it won't make the ballot until '93."

New bus stops all along Maple

BY TIM CARVELL
STAFF WRITER

It's no "Hands Across America" but, on June 18, the Shell station at Maple and Crooks is Troy was symbolically joined with its twin at Maple and Orchard Lake in West Bloomfield.

The two stations mark the beginning and end of Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) bus route 482, a complete one-way trip along Maple takes 34 minutes and costs \$1.25.

The route includes stops at many of the Maple Road shopping centers, including the intersections of

Maple with Telegraph, Woodward and Coolidge.

Passengers on the 9:10 bus last Tuesday morning did not seem excited by the new route.

"This is a new route," said Princess Howard, a Southfield resident who used to take the 488 route to work.

Route 482 was created due to passenger demand, said SMART spokeswoman Melissa Hightower, but she added that it was difficult to foresee who would use the new bus.

"I don't have that information," Hightower said.

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