Canceled suburban bus service may affect jobs

Pontiac WALTON

Beverly

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Franklin

Story.

Thicole Staffold

at 6:30 a.m. this Saturday.
She'll have to, if she wants to make it to her 10 a.m. cashier dent who works at the Kroger grocery store in dewntown Birmingham, plans to get out of bed

Route continues to Sashbaw Rold Park & Ride

Route continues to Sashbaw Rold Park & Ride

D-DOT

Route continues to Sashbaw Rold Park & Ride

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Base of Pontia C wattory | Park of Park & Ride | Park & Ri

Woodward Limited B MESC 1 - Troy Shuttle MESC II -S'fld Shuttle

33 - John R Limited Sashabaw & Baldwin Park & Rides 28 Greenfield Spinner

Troy

SMART OM/and Claws

Huntington V D O.C.C. Woods Detjoit D MILE RD. ZOO Campus

Royal Oak

longer afford to run them. Other bus routes will be altered, said Al Martin, DDOT

director.

"Any time when we are faced with reducing service, especially when it affects employment, it is a disappointment," he said.

disappointment," he said:

The bus routes were implemented in November 1996 and January 1997 to provide public transportation to Detroit residents who were employed or wished to seek employment in the suburbs, he said. According to Martin, adequate service was not available through the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) system, the suburban-based bus service that operates 50 traditional bus lines, of which 28 serve Detroit. "We put these routes in place because either SMAET was not from the said of t

in place because either SMART was not trav-eling to some of these locations or they did so

infrequently," he said.
But officials at SMART strongly disagree, saying they adequately serve the needs of
Detroit residents who require
transportation to the suburbs.
SMART, however, does plan to
assess ridership in the next 30
days and will consider adding
service where DDOT has left
gaps, given the additions are economically viable, said fon Ristau, SMART director of service
development.

gaps, given the additions are economically viable, said Ron Ristau, SMART director of service development.

SMART also plans to add weekeds vening and weekend service on their Route 295 Livonia-Redoffod line. "We are adding services where we feel the need is greatest," Ristau said.

But we can't just provide a service because it existed before. There must be ridership demands to justify it. In most of the locations where DDOT cut services there are SMART alternatives. In some cases, you may have to take two buses."

SMART, however, cannot service some of the areas affected by the cuts, specifically, Novi and Clarkston, because the communities opted not to support the 1995 SMART milling.

Although SMART and DDOT have long tried to establish a coordinated network of bus service to meet the needs of the entire metropolitan area, they have not been able to agree on specific plans.

"I want to coordinate with SMART. I want to very badly," Marin said.

"Many riders use both (systems)," said Ristau, echoing Martin. "We don't want to duplicate our efforts and are trying to build the most efficient network we can. ... We do that on an ongoing basis."

Of the bus lines that DDOT is discontinuing, several benefit Oakland County. They include the John R. Limited, which ends

at Cakland Mall; the Woodward Limited B; the Greenfield Spin-ner, which stops at Northland Mall, among other Southfield locations; and a Park & Ride ser-

ner, which stops at Northland Mall, among other Southfield locations; and a Park & Ride service that transports commuters, from Sashabaw and Baldwin roads in Clarkaton to the Renaissance Center in Detroit.

Two additional lines set up to benefit employees and employers through the Michigan Employment Security Association, a shuttle to the Blue Cross Blue Shield building in Southfield and transportation to the Delphi Automotive building in Troy, have also been canceled.

While DDOT estimates that 1,500 riders will be stranded on a daily basis without their auburban service, Ristau placed the number much lower. "Really, that's not the whole picture. The cuts that we're talking about only affect a small number (of riders). This doesn't mean that riders are out of a bus trip, they just might have to ride a SMART bus. I think when you're really talking about the people who don't have bus service, you're down to a couple hundred."

But Allen Greenfield, district

But Allen Greenfield, district human resources manager for Sears, is certain the change will negatively impact his job, and the quality of customer service at Sears.

Greenfield oversees hiring at the company's stores at Summit Mall in Waterford, Oakland Mall in Troy, Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi and Lakeside Mall in Sterling Heights. He was also working with DDOT to coordinate transportation of Sears employees who reside in Detroit.

"It obviously impacts these people who don't have cars and it patt their jobs in jeopardy, if

people who don't have ears and it puts their jobs in jeopardy, if they can't make alternative arrangements. And we will suf-fer until we can fill their jobs,"

Greenfield said.
Filling entry-level positions at the local Sears stores is at the so jobs is low in nearby communities, he said. Limited public transportation only makes hiring out-of-area employees who don't own care less likely, he said.

"We're definitely at a disadvantage in terms of other major cities. You can't take advantage of the total resources of the metropolitan area."
Capitalizing on "total resources" includes getting Detroit residents to Sears as consumers, Greenfield said. But 'fit taking a bus to Oakland Mall is inconvenient or time consuming, many work come, he said.

"And if you're talking about entry-level jobs, in which an employee earns \$6 to \$7 an hour, and you have several bus connections to make to get to work, it might not be worthwhile.

"We are effering many social programs today to help get peep le off welfare and get work. .by the same token, some of them, because of a lack of transportation, can't get a job or a good job, which is the whole point of the issue. We have good jobs for them, if they can get out here."

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