

SMART

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most people realize."

Relations between SMART and DDOT are not perfect. Kaufman said, and no merger is likely in the immediate future in part because officials within the two systems have deep-seated philosophical differences, he said, on issues such as financing.

But differences between SMART and DDOT are more about money than the delivery of transportation services, said Kaufman, a former Wayne Circuit Court judge. The upcoming millage proposal is an example.

"The City of Detroit won't admit it," Kaufman said. "DDOT won't admit it. But they want our millage to fail. If it fails, they'll be the only public transportation system in the tri-county area, and they will get a significant amount of our state and federal dollars."

Even with these differences, however, Kaufman sees more

cooperation between SMART and DDOT. Even if the systems remain separate, they will likely increase cooperation, he said.

As the millage campaign gets under way, Kaufman expects backing from influential people and organizations — like Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce — that supported it in 1995.

Bloomfield Township resident Matthew Wirgau, who with deputy county executive Kenneth Rogers, represent Oakland

on the SMART board of directors, said that support is based on a fundamental fact. "With SMART we have more service, more riders and improved service," said Wirgau, who is board chair.

"I think there's still room for SMART to improve," said Donald J. Gross, director of community development in Southfield. "But

I think SMART has done a good job of delivering on its promises."

SMART also expects less opposition this time around. Oakland County commissioner Shelley Taub, for example, said she is highly receptive to renewing the SMART millage. "I was very skeptical (in 1995)," said the Bloomfield Hills Republican. "I wasn't sure Oakland County would get its money's worth."

But now she sees SMART is critical to the quality of life in Oakland County.

Another critic who has changed his assessment of SMART is county commissioner John P. Garfield, R-Rochester Hills. "I'm impressed with what SMART has done," said Garfield, who in 1995 was perhaps the transit system's most vocal critic.

"SMART has taken some important steps to get rid of its large (and too often empty) buses, and by lowering its

deficit, SMART has shown it is financially responsible."

Garfield isn't ready to propose that Rochester Hills opt-in to SMART. That community was one of the largest to refuse to vote on the millage in 1995, thereby ending SMART service — or opting-out of the system.

But Garfield wouldn't necessarily oppose such a move either. "I'd have to look at the facts," he said, "to see what it would cost and what we would get in return. But I guess I'd leave that decision to the voters."

Kaufman said SMART will not try to persuade Rochester Hills — or any of the other communities that opted out of the transit system — to reconsider.

At least not yet, anyway.

"But we're always happy to sit down with them to discuss the services they could expect," said Kaufman. "We're always willing to talk."

Parks offer sports camp

Oakland County parks offers a "sports sampler" at its week-long Sports Camp, sponsored by The Sports Authority.

Participants age 8-13 are introduced to sports that encourage teamwork and sportsmanship. Daily activities include a mix of soccer, street hockey, flag football, kickball, volleyball and other sports.

Young athletes can also test their skills at the Waterford Oaks Bicycle Motocross track and swim at the Waterford Oaks Waterpark.

They are also treated to visits from the parks system's mobile units including the Orbobron and Dunk Tank.

Camp dates are set for: June 22-26; July 6-10; July 13-17; July 20-24; July 27-31,

and Aug. 3-7. Camp hours are 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Participating area communities include Auburn Hills, Farmington Hills, Lake Orion, Lathrup Village, Oxford, Rochester, Southfield, Springfield Township and Troy.

Campers will be picked up and dropped off at the community where they register. Pick-up is between 8-9 a.m. Drop off is between 3:45-5 p.m. For registration and fee information, contact the communities listed above.

Call (248) 858-0916 for more information. Visit the Oakland County Parks website at www.co.oakland.mi.us for discount waterpark coupons and other information.

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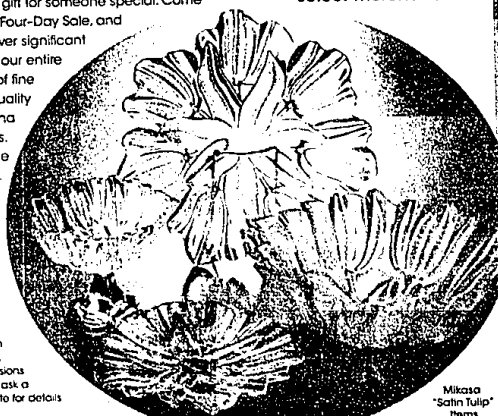
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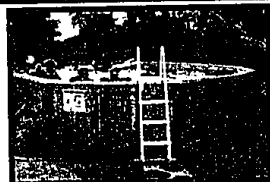
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