

# TRU Moving Forward

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## I-75 Expansion Project and the Triple Bottom Line

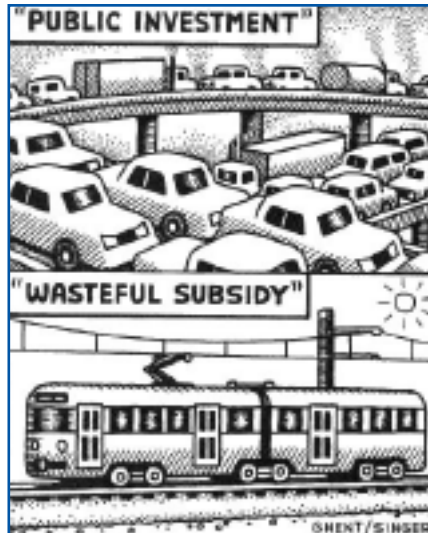
by Larry Hands

On March 12, TRU filed extensive comments with MDOT on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for expanding I-75 between Eight Mile Road and M-59. This project is the first stage of a proposed expansion of I-75 throughout Oakland County and requires major arterial road expansions across the entire swath.

Anyone who has driven I-75 during rush hour has experienced congestion and slowdowns along this route. So why would TRU be against this road expansion?

The reason for TRU's comments is really due to the lack of choices and diversity of our current transportation system and the effect that this lack of diversity has had on our region. After decades of governmental incentives to drain vitality from urban areas, it is now time to use government incentives to bring vitality back to urban areas. We are starting to see a glimmer of hope with the Governor's "Cool Cities" initiative and the recent CreateDetroit conference. While there are many problems that need addressing, TRU proposes that government spending on transportation is the key issue to reinvigorating Detroit. There is no vibrant city anywhere in the U.S. and the world that is not investing in high-quality transit.

As proposed by the Southeast Michigan Sustainable Business Forum ([www.smsbf.org](http://www.smsbf.org)), companies do well when they use a "triple-



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***Should we be willing to pay \$60 million per mile to expand I-75, in order to cut commuting time between Pontiac and Detroit by 90 seconds?***

rail that would begin to restore vitality to our region?

Our current struggle is that we often just don't want to ask these types of questions, especially in Detroit. We keep hearing, and telling *continued on page 2*

bottom line" test. In the public sector, this would mean that public investments should follow this triple-bottom line test:

1. Is the investment good for the region's economy?
2. Is the investment good for the environment?
3. Does it work to bring people together by building community?

A DEIS is supposed to be structured to take into account these issues, but the I-75 DEIS totally bypasses a comparative analysis of alternatives that would address them.

If the triple bottom line test is used, we can begin to take a different perspective on our region and how we want to invest in its future. Look for multiple beneficial cycles, rather than the current status quo sprawl development/urban decay process that causes multiple destructive cycles.

Should we be willing to pay \$60 million per mile to expand I-75, in order to cut commuting time between Pontiac and Detroit by 90 seconds? Or should we invest that money in projects like Woodward Ave. light

**TRU** Transportation Riders United (TRU) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), organization dedicated to promoting sensible transportation policies through public education and action.

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## Martyrs for Mass Transit

by Olive White

Every day we encounter martyrs for the cause of mass transit. People who might be healthy, alive, kept out of jail, if only they had another way to get from here to there. Our effort, as a body politic, is to seek immediate help from the Michigan legislature to restore and expand the \$5 million Comprehensive

Transportation Fund, now in jeopardy.

Consider first a wealthy Oakland County businessman, who declined publishing his

name. For countless years he contributed to Republican coffers and civic charities. Then a guy with bad brakes crashed into the

businessman's car, causing a severe concussion and an upended life without America's fifth freedom — transportation.

He suffered such excruciating headaches

he was unable to drive the family Volvo or company truck. Instead he forked out \$90 to

*continued on page 3*

***Bear in mind, it costs less to put a train down Woodward Avenue in South Oakland than widen I-75 along the same corridor.***

## New Officers and Board Members at TRU

After five years of dyed-in-the-wool commitment to TRU as its president, Karen Kendrick-Hands has decided to step down in order to devote herself full time to her successful knitting store. TRU has been a labor of love for Karen, and she will continue her devotion to furthering TRU's mission as a board member.

The TRU board of directors unanimously voted in Bob Prud'homme, formerly vice president, as the new president. Board member Marcia Yakes takes over as the new vice president. Mike Whims will continue as secretary, and long-time TRU champion and supporter Larry Hands is the new treasurer.

TRU would also like to welcome Francis Grunow, Cheryl Horton and Tommy Meadows to the board of directors.

## I-75 Expansion Project

From page 1

ourselves, that Detroit is different, transit will never work here, we are the motor city—we can't do that!

Ford Motor CEO Bill Ford Jr. said at the Detroit Regional Chamber's Leadership Conference at Mackinac Island last spring that "Ford is handicapped by the absence of a coordinated regional transit system. Until that void is filled, Detroit is unlikely to reclaim its status as a world-class city."

Are we going to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves to change our region, or are we going to drag our feet and stay mired in our community-destroying cycle? Can we muster the political will to make change? Our success as a city, as a region, as a country and as a planet for generations to come will be based on the decisions that we now must make. Saying no to the I-75 expansion project, and choosing instead to begin investing in transportation diversity, is the opportunity that we are now presented with. Now is the time to make good decisions for our future.

## TRU Joins Action against Regional Council SEMCOG sued over suburban sprawl bias in its voting structure

by Steven Gutterman

In November, TRU joined a lawsuit filed by the City of Ferndale against the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). Two individual TRU board members and the interfaith organization MOSES are also co-plaintiffs in the suit, which alleges that SEMCOG's executive board structure is biased against established urban communities, and instead promotes auto-dependency and continued development in rural parts of the region.

SEMCOG is a quasi-governmental planning agency that represents the seven county Detroit metropolitan area. It distributes \$1 billion a year in federal transportation funds and does long-term forecasting and planning for roads, public transit, and other infrastructure projects. Because the agency controls the purse strings for federal and state dollars going to the region, it has a great deal of power in determining what types of projects get built and where.

The lawsuit was filed in the Third Circuit Court for the State of Michigan in Wayne County. It charges that SEMCOG's non-population-weighted voting structure distributes power unfairly in the region, with Detroit getting the short end of the stick. Under the current structure, Detroit, which has close to a million residents, gets three votes. But Monroe County, for example, which has one-sixth Detroit's population, gets four votes. This effectively gives Monroe County more than eight times the per-capita voting power of Detroit. Similarly, Oakland County, which has roughly the same population as Detroit, gets three times the per-capita voting power with its nine votes. Plaintiffs in the suit want the agency to be reorganized or replaced to better represent the interests of the region's population.

The suit charges that SEMCOG's analyses promote discriminatory disinvestment in Detroit and its "inner ring" suburbs such as Ferndale, while directing public dollars towards new development in rural counties. "With regard to its forecasting function," the suit states, "SEMCOG merely analyzes past trends and predicts that they will continue into the future. It then acts and allocates funds based on these predictions."

For several years the region overall has been consuming new land for development at a rate ten times faster than its population growth rate. The massive sprawl migration pattern means that older, established communities are left with declining numbers of people and businesses, physical decay, eroding tax bases, loss of services, and high concentrations of the

region's most financially vulnerable population.

The suit directly links the absence of federally funded mass transit projects in the region to SEMCOG's voting structure: "Oakland County and other

members of SEMCOG have stated their opposition to a mass transit system, resulting in a perpetuation of transportation policies which deny equal access to jobs and services to many residents of southeast Michigan, including a disproportionate percentage of African Americans, who are in need of jobs and services as they become available in the region."

Ferndale City Manager and TRU board member Tom Barwin, who was instrumental in developing the action against SEMCOG, says that the suit is beginning to receive national attention from a variety of groups that are looking at this strategy as "the best hope for instituting an affordable smart growth, urban/metro renewal initiative" in the Detroit region.

SEMCOG insists that Detroit gets more than its share of road project dollars. But that is counting capacity expansion and reconstruction of freeways which largely serve the needs of drivers passing through the city going to and from other parts of the region. Rather than serving the residents of the city and bettering the quality of life there, these freeways carve up the neighborhoods they run through, bringing additional noise, pollution and lower property values. SEMCOG's regional development forecasts justify spending transportation dollars on road expansion projects while disregarding transit as an alternative that would help spur development in established communities.

SEMCOG claims that the agency is pro-transit. The problem is that its planning forecasts only support new freeways and sprawl.

*The lawsuit...directly links the absence of federally funded mass transit projects in the region to SEMCOG's voting structure*



SMART General Manager Dan Dirks, Karen Kendrick-Hands, DDOT Deputy Director Marisol Simón and Mike Whims at TRU's Annual Member Meeting

## TRU's Holds Annual Member Meeting President Kendrick-Hands announces passing of the torch; transit agencies demonstrate cooperative spirit

by Mike Whims

TRU's 2004 Annual Member Meeting was held January 21 at the Hannan House in Detroit, with plenty of food, good conversation and organization activities for the 38 members and supporters who attended.

This is the most important member meeting of the year, because it is when members are given the opportunity to vote on board elections and obtain an Annual Report summary of the previous year's actions and activities. This year the meeting included all of that and more.

President Karen Kendrick-Hands opened the meeting with a review of TRU's past accomplishments and disappointments since our founding in 1999, and she announced that she would be stepping down from the presidency. The members recognized Karen's extraordinary leadership over five years in developing TRU into the dynamic organization that it is and gave her a standing ovation.

The well-received highlight of this year's meeting was a joint presentation by DDOT Deputy Director, Marisol Simón, and SMART General Manager, Dan Dirks. As evidenced by their gracious acceptance of TRU's invitation to appear together, the two transit leaders provided a fairly detailed discussion of efforts planned and underway for regional bus transit service coordination

and agency cooperation. Their words were music to the ears of transit users, and TRU can take well-deserved credit as a force which helped bring about the regional will to begin this much-awaited collaboration of transit providers.

The business side of the meeting culminated with the unanimous election of a new board of directors for TRU. The inaugural board, elected at the 2001 Annual Member Meeting, had reached the end of their terms. This year's election provided for some staggered terms for future leadership continuity, and saw half of the original board members standing for re-election. The new board, and officers who were elected afterward at the February 10 board meeting, can be seen in this newsletter issue header. The new board reflects well the demographics of the transit-service region, with 50% of the board being Detroit city residents.

The meeting concluded on a note of hope and commitment to move the region forward in transportation thinking. Both Ms. Simón and Mr. Dirks made themselves available for questions and lively interplay with the many transit experts in TRU's membership ranks.

Please plan to attend member meetings in 2004, and don't miss next year's Annual Member Meeting! TRU needs your support in order to move forward.

## Martyrs for Mass Transit

From page 1

take a cab from home to a church in Bloomfield Hills to attend a funeral. He spends up to three hours trying to commute via bus. All of us are riding on the mass need for transit, whether it is because the car is in the shop, we're too drunk to drive tonight, or health prohibits driving.

Clinton Township insurance salesman, Robert W. Gallas, 47 will likely spend the rest of his life wishing public transportation existed along Romeo Plank Road in Clinton Township when he walked drunk out a bar and stepped on the gas that fateful night in early February.

Driving home on an unlit street he killed 20-year old Ronald Young of Hamtramck, thought he hit a tree branch and left the scene. He injured Young's girlfriend, Sheerita Wilson and dragged the baby, Deborah Young, for over a mile. The Hamtramck family got lost trying to find a bus stop after visiting Young's father at Macomb County Jail.

By the grace of God the police found little Deborah and got her to Children's Hospital in Detroit where she was released a week later. Sheerita Wilson was also released to suffer the grief of her lost lover. Gallas shares space in the same jail as Young's father, facing charges of leaving the scene of an accident, two counts of drunken driving causing a serious injury and one count of drunken driving causing death.

We understand hazards to mass transit in a cash-strapped economy. Bear in mind, it costs less to put a train down Woodward Avenue in South Oakland than widen I-75 along the same corridor. We could put a ritzy train from downtown to Pontiac and more buses along every interurban route if we postponed some highway reconstruction. The same effort would place us in league with thriving, transit abundant cities like Boston, Seattle or Chicago.

Even more importantly, we'd start communicating with one another, city dweller, suburban dweller, rich and poor, black and white. Looking at each other face to face, instead of speeding by in our four-wheeled steel tubes.

None of us can restore the health of this benevolent executive, bring back the life of Ronald Young or buy a cab fare for jailed Robert Gallas. We can prevent the next tragedies from happening. Remember 5,000 pedestrians are killed and 85,000 are injured every year, according to U.S. studies. Let's work together to build a vital, connected society.

I urge you to act wisely.

## Mark Your Calendar!

All meeting locations are in Detroit unless otherwise indicated.

### TRU Riders' Voice

3rd Monday of each month, 6 pm  
TRU HQ, 1150 Griswold, 28th fl.

### TRU Member Meeting

Tuesday, May 11, 6 pm (tentative)  
Hannan House, 4750 Woodward

### TRU Board

Tuesday, June 8, 7 pm  
TRU HQ, 1150 Griswold, 28th fl.

### TRU Leadership Retreat

Friday and Saturday, April 30  
and May 1

### Accessible Transit Coalition

2nd Monday of each month, 1 pm  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
21311 Civic Center Drive, Southfield

### City Council Budget Hearings

General Budget: Wednesday, April 21  
and Monday, May 10, 5 pm  
DDOT Budget: Monday, May 5, 2 pm  
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center

### DARTA

4th Friday of each month, 1 pm  
Chamber of Commerce,  
1 Woodward, 19th fl.

### DDOT Advisory Commission

3rd Wednesday of each month,  
10 am  
DDOT HQ, 1301 E. Warren

### DDOT Customer Comment

3rd Thursday of each month, 5 pm  
DDOT HQ, 1301 E. Warren

### DDOT Elderly and Handicapped Local Advisory Council

Friday, June 18, 10 am  
SMART HQ, 660 Woodward, 9th fl.

### DDOT Local Advisory Council

Tuesday, May 18, 10 am  
DDOT HQ, 1301 E. Warren

### SMART Board of Directors

4th Thursday of each month, 2 pm  
SMART HQ, 660 Woodward, 9th fl.

**Note:** May meeting will take place the  
3rd Thursday.

### SMART E & H

June 18, 10 am (tentative)  
SMART HQ, 660 Woodward, 9th fl.

## TRU Notes

### Director change at DDOT

In a move that surprised many, including TRU leadership, DDOT deputy director Marisol Simón resigned her position in late March. Ms. Simón was instrumental in numerous improvements in DDOT service over the last year, bringing what TRU's Riders' Voice Committee Chair Patty Fedewa called a "new attitude" to the department. "She had the understanding of transit and the fortitude to address DDOT's substantial, long-term

problems," said Fedewa. TRU regrets Ms. Simón's departure.

Mayor Kilpatrick has appointed Norman White as the new director of DDOT. According to the mayor's office, "service is Mayor Kilpatrick's number one priority." TRU remains hopeful and watchful that DDOT will continue to evolve into a successful transit agency. TRU looks forward to a continued good working relationship with Director White.

### Map activity

The TRU website ([www.detroittransit.org](http://www.detroittransit.org).) now features Downtown Detroit and Metro Detroit Region bus system maps, as well as bus frequency schedules for all DDOT and SMART routes!

DDOT sought TRU's review and input recently on a new system transit map under development at the agency. The drafts look very good, and the map should be a "hit" with

transit riders. In keeping with TRU's long-held and often-expressed vision, the map includes SMART routes and points of interest on a useable street base.

DARTA continues to work on a large-scale regional map that will include the general transit service area. A completion date has not been announced.

### DDOT sees significant ridership declines

#### *Other transit systems in the state experience increases*

According to U.S. Government National Transit Database figures, DDOT ridership declined 28% over the five-year period ending 2002, the most recent year for which the federal agency has published figures.

SMART ridership increased by 38% over the same period, and transit agencies serving the Grand Rapids, Lansing and Ann Arbor areas also experienced ridership increases. In fact, ridership on the Lansing region's Capitol Area Transit Authority buses nearly doubled

over the five-year period.

The Detroit bus system still dwarfs these other systems in size and serves more riders than all of them combined. "But declining numbers for the state's largest transit system serving the largest transit-dependent population is exactly the wrong direction that DDOT should be headed in," says Mike Whims, who provided the data analysis. The full ridership analysis can be seen at

[www.hometown.aol.com/motranzit](http://www.hometown.aol.com/motranzit)

### Accessible Transit Coalition

The consumers and organizations that make up the ATC advocate for affordable, flexible, and responsive public transportation for all who need accessible transit, through networking, collaboration and education.

For more information contact Susan Marsh [skmarsh@omcil.org](mailto:skmarsh@omcil.org) or Matt Beaudry [mbeaudry@omcil.org](mailto:mbeaudry@omcil.org) at 888 856-5434, or log on to: [www.pop.match.org:8080/atc2](http://www.pop.match.org:8080/atc2)

### DARTA

Wayne County resident Wendy Barrett has joined DARTA as senior administrator. She will be working with the DARTA board to prepare the necessary business plans and procedures to move DARTA toward funds acquisition and selecting a chief executive. This important administrative job is certainly in capable hands and TRU wishes Wendy well at DARTA.

In late March, DARTA received \$347,725 in start-up funds from the Federal

Transportation Administration to support hiring of staff and an executive and begin planning activities. This grant is part of a package of federal funds that has been held up due to the AFSCME mechanics and clerical locals' suit against DARTA. The new authority hopes to receive approximately \$500,000 in funding from the Federal Highway Administration in coming weeks. It has also received a \$24,300 grant from MDOT for start-up activities.

# TRU Issues Report to City Council on DDOT's Missed Benchmarks—Asks for Promised Fare Reduction

by Patty Fedewa

DDOT met some, but not all, of the benchmarks that had been stipulated by Council when it granted the transit agency a \$0.25 fare increase in November 2002. DDOT has now twice failed to meet requirements set by Council resolutions. Last May by resolution, the City Council concluded that DDOT would be expected to meet all of the benchmarks by February 1 of this year, or Mayor Kilpatrick would include a reduced fare in his budget for 2004-2005.

One of the benchmarks the agency has been able to meet is improvement of bus advertising. DDOT has amended its advertising contracts with a resultant increase in bus ads, although some buses still have no advertising in them at all. DDOT has also met the benchmark for cleaner bus interiors by changing the work schedule of its cleaning personnel: the buses are noticeably cleaner as a result.

The benchmarks that DDOT did not meet include increasing ridership, distribution of a system-wide map, the implementation of a

public relations campaign, and development of a public participation plan.

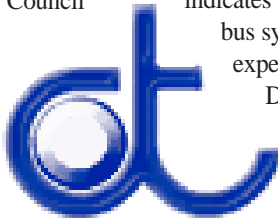
DDOT has reported that ridership has gone down due to the fare increase to \$1.50 and service problems. Ridership is the best measure of service, and decreasing ridership indicates declining service quality. Other

bus systems around the state are experiencing increases in ridership.

DDOT's ridership decline has offset most of the anticipated revenue boost the agency had predicted the fare increase would generate. Only \$1 million of the anticipated

\$4.5 million revenue increase has materialized.

DDOT has not demonstrated sufficient service improvements to justify the higher fare and has not met the benchmarks Council required. TRU recommends that the fares be reduced, and the City of Detroit approve these lower fares as a means of increasing ridership and revenues. A fare "roll-back" at this time of economic hardship will have a social "pay-back" with little or no revenue loss for the City.



## TRU Supporters

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## TRU needs your involvement – become a member today!

TRU is committed to continuing the hard work necessary to build an on-time, efficient and affordable transportation system in Southeast Michigan. As a non-profit organization, we rely on membership and community support. Much of our work is done by dedicated volunteers who get paid with a slice of pizza. TRU needs you – if you are not a member, please join now! If you are a member, encourage your friends, family and colleagues to join. *Together, we can move our region forward!*

**Yes! I want to become a TRU member:**

\$20 Standard       \$5 Basic       \$30 Family       \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Yes, I would like to volunteer my time. Please contact me.

Special skill(s) you can contribute \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to **TRU** and mail to **1150 Griswold, Suite 2800, Detroit, MI 48226**

TRU is a 501(c)(3), so your membership donation is tax deductible.

# Riders' Voice Update

by Patty Fedewa

The Riders' Voice Committee has been working hard to improve are existing bus service. The following are some of the projects we are working on:

## DOWNTOWN TRANSIT CENTER

The downtown DDOT transit center is moving along. On February 25, City Council voted to approve an amended transit center project. At this time, DDOT is planning to build a single-story transit center that will include participation by SMART and Transit Windsor. The transit center is schedule to be functioning by June 2005, and completed by January 1, 2006. TRU members attended the hearings before City Council and are monitoring the project as it progresses.

## DDOT

DDOT has recently sought TRU's input on signage improvements at Capital Park and lower Woodward Avenue. TRU and DDOT representatives walked the area on a recent rainy day and came to agreement on several practical improvements that will help solve some of the mystery of locating buses here. DDOT has also received and put into circulation sixty new low-floor buses. These kneeling buses have ramps that can be reliably operated for disabled riders. Not only will these new buses improve the lives of

disabled riders, but they will also free up time for DDOT's mechanics to keep its buses in better condition. Watch for the new buses as you ride around the region.

## SMART

TRU is asking SMART to advertise its service to Metro Airport. SMART has two bus routes (the 125 and 285) that service the Smith Terminal. However, SMART has no advertising at Metro Airport to show the service that they do provide. Air travelers see numerous advertisements for taxis, hotel shuttles and Metro Cars limousine service, but nothing for transit. TRU is challenging SMART to provide equal time for transit and obtain more riders.

## TIMELINESS

TRU is encouraging all riders to keep track of when your bus arrives in relation to its scheduled time. We are compiling this information, which will be submitted to DDOT and SMART. At this time, DDOT and SMART do not keep extensive timeliness records. In order to encourage them to keep better records and to alert our transit providers of actual bus timeliness, we are asking all of you to submit your bus riding records. Please call or e-mail the TRU office for more information.



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## TRU Moving Forward

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