



HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press

Stephen Hands, 18, of Grosse Pointe Park gives brochures to motorists on the Forest exit from the Lodge Freeway on Tuesday. Transportation Riders United urges motorists to ride buses.

Group urges riding bus for commuters

Aug. 6 millage for suburban service promoted

By KATHLEEN GRAY
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Dewey Snell hasn't taken the bus to work in more than 40 years.

But the 59-year-old Detroit resident won't take anything for granted. So when a volunteer with Transportation Riders United handed him a brochure as he bypassed the construction on the Lodge Freeway Tuesday morning, he didn't discount the message that taking a bus might allow him to avoid the perils of potholes and construction.

"You can never say never," he said. "I could be taking the bus next week."

Karen Kendrick-Hands, president of TRU, and her two sons Stephen, 18, and Philip, 21, stood along the Lodge exit ramp at Forest in Detroit to let rush-hour commuters know that there is an alternative to the annual summer nightmare of construction detours.

Other members of the Detroit-based advocacy organization offered flyers to drivers along the Grand River exit ramp off the Lodge.

"A lot of people look at it and say it's a great idea," said Stephen Hands of Grosse Pointe Park. "But other times, I can't pass a single one out along a row of cars."

The group has a tough task. The 2000 Census showed that metro Detroiters are among the

least likely people in the nation to take public transportation. But TRU members said they hope their morning foray into the exhaust fumes and lines of traffic will help raise the consciousness of the driving public and give a plug to a millage proposal for suburban bus service.

The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation will ask voters on Aug. 6 to approve a 0.60-mill rate for bus service in 28 communities in Wayne County, 22 in Oakland County and all of Macomb County. The other communities in Wayne and Oakland have decided not to put the issue on the ballot.

The ballot proposal represents a renewal of the 0.33 mills that have been levied since 1995 and an increase of 0.27 mills. It would raise \$45 million for SMART, which intends to replace its aging fleet of buses, improve services and make up for declines in state funding.

Home owners with property with a taxable value of \$100,000 would see a jump from \$33 to \$60 a year for SMART.

Dan Dirks, general manager of SMART, said if the millage fails in any of the three counties, bus service in those areas will end almost immediately. "It's so difficult this time because it's such a tough year," he said.

Contact KATHLEEN GRAY at 248-586-2603 or gray@freepress.com.