



News

Macomb County Board of Commissioners

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Board of Commissioners Supports SMART and Creation of a Regional Transit Authority

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. — In a show of support for public transportation, the Macomb County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved two resolutions at its June 23, 2011 Full Board meeting.

The resolutions, introduced by Commissioners Toni Mocerri and David Flynn, support the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation's (SMART) effort to resolve emerging funding challenges, as well as the creation of a regional transit authority.

The resolutions come after a presentation was made by SMART officials to the Economic Development Committee last week, where it was noted that while SMART serves 40,000 people each day and makes more than 12 million passenger trips per year, its millage (.59 mills) is less than one-third of the average urban area transit millage in the state (1.85 mills), and the lowest among large urban areas in the country. With a declining tax base, over the next four years, SMART is projecting to lose almost \$40 million in property tax revenues, which are its largest source of funding.

"Southeast Michigan continues to lag behind nationally in recognizing that public transit is essential to quality-of-life. It creates jobs and keeps residents here," Commissioner Mocerri said. "More than 63-percent SMART riders in Macomb County use the system to go to work. If we're serious about jobs and getting our residents back to work, then we must support this mode of transportation."

While a comprehensive regional transit service plan was unanimously agreed upon in 2008 by members of Regional Transit Coordinating Council (RTCC) with representation from the City of Detroit and Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, plans to move forward quickly stalled. As a result, the metropolitan Detroit area is not only losing out on countless federal dollars and local economic regeneration, but it is the only region among the country's 41 largest to be without a transit authority leading the charge on a regional effort.

"Macomb County and southeastern Michigan need to start capturing federal funding to provide first-rate public transportation in this region while boosting our local economy," Commissioner Flynn said. "With about \$6 of private investment generated for every dollar spent on public transportation, the time for action is now."

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