



## Commissioner finds riding bus to work could be SMART

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By Stacy Jenkins

Staff writer

Oakland County Commissioner Mike Rogers was doing a little creative research last week.

He took to the streets to gain first-hand knowledge of the SMART bus system. He rode the SMART bus to his job in Southfield and to the Oakland County complex in Farmington Hills) said his experience had proved interesting.

He started the week by catching a bus from the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. He mapped his route to get to his civil engineering job on 12 Mile in Southfield, but he slipped up by catching the wrong bus. He was headed westbound on 12 Mile instead of eastbound.

"So, I was dropped off at 12 Mile and Haggerty and the next bus wasn't coming until 58 minutes later," Roger said.

In the pouring rain, Rogers said he didn't want to stand and wait for nearly an hour for the next bus, so he walked a mile to 12 Mile and Halsted to wait for the bus. There was a bench to sit on, but he said he didn't sit because it was raining.

It was a real experience.

"Individuals with no means of transportation have to go through this all the time," he said.

Another challenge was expected to come this morning, Thursday, when Rogers said he would attempt to take the SMART bus from OCC to Pontiac. In mapping his route, however, he noticed there is no direct line to the Oakland County complex on Telegraph. He said he may have to take the SMART bus to Telegraph and M-59, then ride his bicycle from there to the county complex.

"I have to be there for a 9 a.m. meeting, and there's no bus that can get me there by 9 o'clock," he said, noting this is another example of the real challenges of the SMART system.

A known supporter of public transportation, Rogers said he decided to ride the bus this week for three reasons.

"I wanted to be able to say I really do support it by actually taking it," he said. "And, I want to be able to make better decisions. We're going to have some real interesting conversations about this real soon (in Farmington Hills) and I want to be able to add something to that conversation."

The third reason Rogers decided to take the bus this week was made clear when he filled his truck with \$73 worth of gasoline.

"I thought, 'There has to be another option,'" he said.

The Farmington Hills City Council started discussions recently about the financial aspects and the viability of the city continuing to opt for the SMART system via a millage paid by taxpayers.

Rogers will share his thoughts and observations when the week is up, but a few things he has already noticed: The SMART system offers little flexibility for riders, but once he successfully landed on the correct

route, he said he was able to "sit back and relax."

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