

Hackel: Let's not rush to create "obsolete" regional transit in southeast Michigan

By SARAH CWIEK · JAN 14, 2018



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A regional millage to fund a new bus rapid transit-based system across narrowly failed in 2016.

Metro Detroit leaders have been meeting privately for months to develop a new plan, they hope for the 2018 ballot.

The details still aren't public. But it reportedly has the same focus on bus rapid transit, across a smaller area than the 2016 plan proposed.

But Hackel denies there's any consensus on anything resembling a plan right now. "Whatever might be compiled and whatever might be there ... that, to me, is not the plan," he said.

Any such plan must figure out a way to leverage the money Macomb brings "to enhance mobility" and transportation infrastructure more broadly, said Hackel. "To figure out what not only works for transit, but what works for transportation in general.

“My thought is, why are we trying to chase the system that somebody else has, and create something that’s going to become obsolete? Why aren’t we leading this conversation, creating transportation in a far different way?”

It’s not clear yet exactly what that “far different way” would look like, but regional transit is sure to be a big topic when Hackel and the other “Big Four” Metro Detroit leaders — Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, Wayne County Executive Warren Evans, and Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan — meet for their annual public talk during Detroit’s North American International Auto Show later this month.

Hackel and Patterson were notably lukewarm about the 2016 transit millage, which didn’t pull off big enough majorities in Wayne and Washtenaw counties to win. The 2018 proposal will reportedly leave out the most outlying areas of those counties to shore up support in more urban areas where people are more likely to use transit.

Hackel was also skeptical about the prospect of getting any kind of transit millage proposal on the 2018 ballot, saying that would require some “heavy lifting.”

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