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MEAP stays: There may have been changes, but the Michigan Education Assessment Program isn't going away./A7

COMMUNITY LIFE

Razor sharp: Hairstylists will give you a trim. But Abe Aon is one of a dying breed of real barbers, folks who undergo extra training just to pick up a pair of scissors./B1

SPORTS

Volleyball duel: North Farmington earned its first league victory Monday by defeating crosstown rival Farmington./C1

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3 cleaners holdups may be connected

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A gunman terrorized two women at Farmington Hills cleaners and indirectly led another man to be handcuffed in a case of mistaken identity Friday.

The same man is believed to be involved in three armed robberies at cleaners in Livonia and Novi Feb. 20-21.

"We believe they're related," said Sgt. Tim Swanson, Hills police. "The descriptions match on the individual and the gun involved."

At 1 p.m., a man walked into the Ross Cleaners on Grand River and Hagerty and asked the clerk for a favor, revealing a semi-automatic handgun. The woman ran into the back, screaming "He's got a gun; get out." Both women fled out the back door.

The pair ran to a nearby flower shop, which was locked and started toward a Coney Island when they saw the gunman outside. He told them to go back into the cleaners; he wouldn't hurt them.

They ran back to the flower shop and began pounding on the door, which someone finally opened. Once inside, they locked the door and phoned police.

On Feb. 20, Mai Kai Cleaners on Nine Mile and Novi roads was held up at 8 a.m. A similar armed robbery took place around noon at One Price Cleaners on Eight Mile and Middlebelt.

Village Cleaners on Seven Mile and Farmington roads was robbed at 4:30 p.m. Saturday.

The gunman is described as a white male in his 20s, wearing a black baseball cap, black jacket and dark pants. He may have been driving a late 1980s dark Ford Ranger, police reports said.

That description led to a Commerce Township man, 44, being handcuffed and taken to Ross Cleaners so employees could identify him. He was then released.

Please see ROBBERIES, A6

Snarled roads fix: \$6 million



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

To get to work in the morning, Sandy Nadeau drives through a gauntlet of snarled traffic and makes daring left turns for which St. Christopher medals are placed on dashboards.

"It's usually backed up over here and at the intersection where you turn left," said Nadeau, who is a waitress at Silverman's Restaurant and Deli,

Survey says: Orchard/12 tops list of trouble

pointing to Orchard Lake where vehicles feed on and off of I-96. While gazing out of the restaurant window, Nadeau retraces her morning commute from Westland up through Orchard Lake to 12 Mile. At the light, she makes a left turn onto the west-bound lane of 12 Mile and then another sharp left across three lanes of east-bound traffic into the Comfort Inn.

A concrete median on Orchard Lake prevents her and other motorists from turning left directly into Silverman's lot. The circular route adds 10-20 minutes on her ride into work.

Of 1,900 people who took part in a survey conducted by Metro Transportation Group, 85 percent view traffic congestion as a "fairly serious" to "very serious" problem.

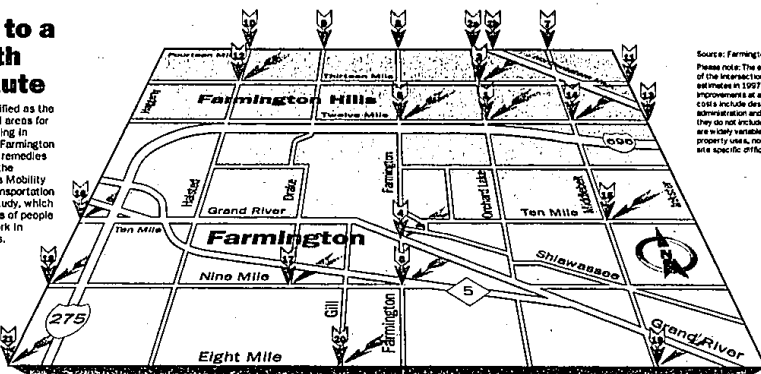
"The study is going to be a jumping off point for an action plan to have traffic move more smoothly through the city," said Daniel Hobbs, Farmington Hills city manager. "If you go through the study, there are no surprises. The top congested areas are the ones you'd expect."

Second on the list is the Grand River, Avenue and Halsted and 10 others.

Please see TRAFFIC, A6

Paths to a smooth commute

These are identified as the most congested areas for motorists traveling in Farmington and Farmington Hills along with remedies as proposed in the Farmington Hills Mobility Study. Metro Transportation Group did the study, which included surveys of people who live and work in Farmington Hills.



Source: Farmington Hills Mobility Study
Please note: The estimated costs for each of the intersections are standardized estimates in 1997 dollars based on typical improvements at a given location. These costs include design, contract administration and construction. However, they do not include right-of-way costs that are highly variable based on the existing property lines, nor any contingencies for site specific activities.

Recommended Intersection Improvements

Estimated costs in order of priority

- Arrow 1**
Orchard Lake/12 Mile --
• Add NB and SB dual left-turn lanes
• Add WB right-turn lane
• Convert existing SB right-turn to a shared thru/right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$500,000 to \$650,000
- Arrow 2a and 2b**
Orchard Lake/24 Mile/Northwestern --
14 Mile/Orchard Lake (2a):
• Add NB, SB & EB right-turn lanes
Est. cost: \$195,000
14 Mile/Northwestern Hwy. (2b):
• Add dual NB left-turn lane
Est. cost: \$260,000
• Add one EB & WB thru lane or separate NB left-turns to a new 14 Mile intersection
Est. cost: \$400,000 to \$550,000
- Arrow 3**
Orchard Lake/13 Mile --
• Add NB, SB and EB right-turn lanes
Est. cost: \$260,000
- Arrow 4**
Farmington/Grand River --
• Prohibit EB & WB left turns
Est. cost: N/A
- Arrow 5**
Farmington/12 Mile --
• Add NB and SB dual left-turn lanes
• Convert existing SB right-turn lane to a shared thru/right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$500,000 to \$650,000
- Arrow 6**
Farmington/9 Mile --
• Add 4-way left-turn signals
Est. cost: \$50,000
- Arrow 7**
14 Mile/Middlebelt --
• Add SB right-turn lane
• Add NB and WB thru lanes
Est. cost: \$320,000
- Arrow 8**
14 Mile/Farmington --
• Add WB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$320,000
- Arrow 9**
14 Mile/Drake --
• Add EB thru lane
• Add WB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$320,000
- Arrow 10**
14 Mile/Halsted --
• Add EB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$65,000
- Arrow 11**
13 Mile/Inkster --
• Add NB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$65,000
- Arrow 12**
13 Mile/Halsted --
• Add NB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$65,000
- Arrow 13**
12 Mile/Inkster --
• Add NB right-turn lane
• Add EB and WB thru lanes
Est. cost: \$570,000
- Arrow 14**
12 Mile/Middlebelt --
• Add NB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$65,000
- Arrow 15**
10 Mile/Middlebelt --
• Add SB thru lane
Est. cost: \$125,000
- Arrow 16**
10 Mile/Haggerty --
• Add SB and WB right-turn lanes
Est. cost: \$125,000
- Arrow 17**
9 Mile/Drake --
• Add SB left-turn lane
Est. cost: \$125,000
- Arrow 18**
9 Mile/Haggerty --
• Convert existing NB and SB right-turn lanes to a shared thru/right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$125,000
- Arrow 19**
8 Mile/Middlebelt --
• Add dual WB left-turn lane
• Add SB and EB right-turn lanes
Est. cost: \$375,000
- Arrow 20**
8 Mile/Gill --
• Add NB & SB left-turn lanes
Est. cost: \$125,000
- Arrow 21**
8 Mile/Haggerty --
• Add dual SB left-turn lane
• Add SB right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$500,000 to \$650,000

lanes to a shared thru/right-turn lane
Est. cost: \$125,000

Arrow 19

8 Mile/Middlebelt --

• Add dual WB left-turn lane

• Add SB and EB right-turn lanes

Est. cost: \$375,000

Arrow 20

8 Mile/Gill --

• Add NB & SB left-turn lanes

Est. cost: \$125,000

Arrow 21

8 Mile/Haggerty --

• Add dual SB left-turn lane

• Add SB right-turn lane

Est. cost: \$500,000 to \$650,000

TOTAL: \$4,795,000 to \$5,395,000

Non-capital Improvements:

- Traffic signals**
 - Citywide 102 locations
Est. cost: \$150,000
- Access management**
 - Citywide through ordinance
Est. cost: \$15,000
- Pavement management system**
 - Citywide
Est. cost: \$150,000
- TOTAL: \$315,000**
- GRAND TOTAL: \$5,110,000 to \$5,710,000**

TRAVIS GRANT/STAFF ARTIST

Condo project still isn't getting Hills OK

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

It's the Duracell of developments: It keeps going and going and never goes away.

The proposed 64-unit Glen Oaks Village condominium project for south 13 Mile Road near Detroit Baptist Manor has yet another hurdle: site plan approval. That will wait until the Farmington Hills City Council's next meeting March 16.

At Monday's meeting, city council members said they didn't feel the agenda item on the issue clearly stated they'd be deciding both the project's

qualification as a planned unit development and site plan approval. They unanimously approved the project's qualification as a PUD and delayed the site plan review, continuing what has been a two-year battle.

Nearly residents are still worried about the effects of the condominium project, which includes townhouses more than 30 feet tall. They want more details.

But those won't come until the Phoenix Land Development and city staff negotiate a deal as part of the

Please see CONDOS, A6

Reward for stolen poster

A 20-poster display showing the achievements of black women has traveled all over Michigan and elsewhere for the past five years with no problem.

But when the posters hit Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus recently that there was a problem.

One of the valuable, Smithsonian Institution-produced posters, showing Aretha Franklin and other black female musicians, was pruned off its backing and stolen.

"I'm sure the people who took it don't realize it's irreplaceable," said Lynette Brown of the American Association of University Women, which sponsored the exhibit.

Brown is offering a \$100 reward for the poster's safe return (call the Observer at 477-6460 to arrange a no-questions-asked return).

The poster is 24-inches-by-36-inches with the

FARMINGTON FOCUS

word "music" in large print on the top and the bottom saying "Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds."

Imogene Bailey, a counselor at OCC and member of the campus diversity committee, said she arranged for the posters to be displayed there during Black History Month.

Lotto money

For 10 years, a Farmington Hills man played Michigan Lottery games in anticipation of hitting pay dirt. But when his big moment finally came, he reacted with shock and silence.

Gold shines here too



Inspiring: Stephanie Henkel, Farmington Hills Nighthawks player manager, pauses after a game at the Hills ice arena where players expect a boom in women's hockey after the U.S. team's gold medal. For more, see Sports on Page C1.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LESLIE

The 41-year-old winner, who requested anonymity, kept quiet for two days about the fact he won the \$3.2 million Michigan Lotto. The drawing was held Saturday, Feb. 7, but he didn't find out until Tuesday, Feb. 10, that he matched all six numbers - 4, 9, 10, 22, 32 and 42.

"I thought it must have been wrong so I didn't tell anyone until two days later when I announced it to my family at a birthday party," said the newest Lotto millionaire.

What will he do with the \$128,000 (before taxes) first installment? He and his wife will take a vacation, invest for their children's education and "maybe take an early retirement or make a career change."

He purchased the "easy pick" ducat at 7-Eleven, 29318 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington.

