## Political foot-dragging charged in M-275 alternative planning

Two members of the Michigan State Highway Commission are displeased with a proposed \$2 million, four-year study of alternatives to the now-can-celled M-278 freeway project. Commission Chairman Peter B. Fletcher and Commissioner Weston Vivian think the proposed study would

Flether: and Commissioner Weaton Visian limit he proposed study would be too costly and lengthy, and last week both accused the Pepartment of State Highways and Transportation of delaying the study.

The commissioners said it appeared that the department was delaying its study so that the three members who voted to cancel Mz75 last January—Fletcher, Vivian and Hannes Myers—may not be on the commission when a final recommendation is made in 1981. Unless they are reappointed, all three opponents of Mz75 will lose their seats before that time. The four-member commission is appointed by the governor for four-year terms. nor for four-year terms

Vivian also indicated that the com-nission may order some west Oakland mission may order some west Oakland County road improvements next year without departmental reports and recommendations. Last May, Vivan suggested intersection improvements for Northwestern Highway at Twelve Mile Road and Fourteen Mile-Orchard Lake.

Lake.

After blasting the highway department for the alleged delaying tactics and the Oakland County Road Commission for appealing a recent State Court of Appeals ruling against the proposed extension of Northwestern

Highway, the commission told the department to come up with another report on the M-275 alternatives by next month.

Department Director John Woodford

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Department Director John Woodford defended the proposed study, saying that staff engineers have to begin new surveys on west Oakland road needs because of commission criticisms of earlier studies.

After the meeting, Jim Rienstra, the highway department's M-275 alternatives study coordinator, said he still developed the studies of the s

18 months to complete.

"I think the purpose of the study was to find all improvements that are necessary." Rienstra continued.

As proposed by Rienstra, the alternatives study would cost some \$2 mil-lion, primarily for new aerial photographs, an origin-destination survey, and the services of an outside consultant.

In a recent letter to Stephen Rosman, chairman of the Chizers in Opposition to M-275, the coordinator outlined a timeable that calls for a final recommendation to be made by Sept. 30, 1981.

Fletcher last week questioned why the department dosan't know more about an area in which it planned to build a \$70-million freeway, adding, "You're starting at much more of a ground zero than necessary." Rosman and Dick Grow, of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) which also opposed M-25, blasted the department for draging its feet on the alternatives study. Rosman has noted that opponents of the original freeway feel that something should be done to improve traffic conditions in west Oakland County and his group has propsed an alternative that calls for improvements, but not widening, of a corridor along Haggerty, Richardson, Union Lake and Williams Lake roads.

In scrapping M-275 last January, Pletcher said that rising road construction costs and the need for a banaced transportation system made it impossible for the state to build every mile of highway it had ever planned. However, the commission agreed that there are road problems in west Oakland County and said it would work to correct those problems.

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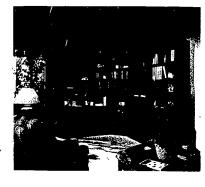
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