

# Highway chief questions need for trunkline

By DAVID RAY

There is no clear justification for the provision of state trunkline service in western Oakland County, according to John P. Woodford, director of the Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation.

That conclusion was included in a five-page report, dated February 10, from Woodford to the Michigan State Highway Commission in response to a comment made last January by Commissioner Weston E. Vivian.

"The basic question of whether the provision of state trunkline service within western Oakland county is justified remains a clouded issue," Woodford stated in the memo.

With the cancellation of the M-275 freeway, the director wrote, "The basis for state trunkline service must be justified based upon area service and the attraction of the west Oakland area to the statewide network. That such justification exists is not clear."

Woodford added that "some limited state trunkline service along the existing arterial network may be warranted, given the significant number of state trunkline trips generated within the area, particularly for that portion of the area lying below (south of) M-58 and within the southeast portion of the area under consideration." However, the director stated that state trunkline service north of M-59 "cannot be justified."

In order for the Highway Commission to determine whether state trunkline service is warranted between I-96 and M-59, Woodford said two questions must be answered.

"Do the benefits of such an improvement outweigh the social, economic and environmental costs caused by the construction of such a facility to state standards?" and

"Assuming that the benefits outweigh the costs, what priority basis would construction of such a route have in comparison to other improvements needed for the existing state trunkline network?"

Asked for a reaction to Woodford's report, Vivian said that the department director "seemed to be saying that the commission could go either way on this."

He's not saying a state trunkline is justified, and he's not saying it isn't justified.

Vivian had asked for Woodford's opinion on whether there was a need for some sort of thoroughfare in west Oakland and the report, the commissioner said, only answers his question "in the sense that he provided us with a report he said he was preparing."

Chester P. Kochanski, spokesman for the M-275 Road Crisis Committee, learned of Woodford's memo last week and discussed the report with Highway Commission Chairman Peter B. Fletcher.

Fletcher later said that if the commission concludes that a state trunkline is not justified, the department has explored the possibility of acting as a broker to assist the Oakland

County Road Commission in obtaining federal funds for road improvements. The commission chairman said that possibility has been "discussed right along as an alternative."

He said the department has not "recommended that approach, but is preparing for that contingency."

Fletcher added that he cannot predict when the commission will decide whether a state trunkline is justified. In September, the commission said it recognized the "general community agreement that traffic problems do exist in the area and the commission acknowledges that it has a role in solving these problems through federal and state funding."

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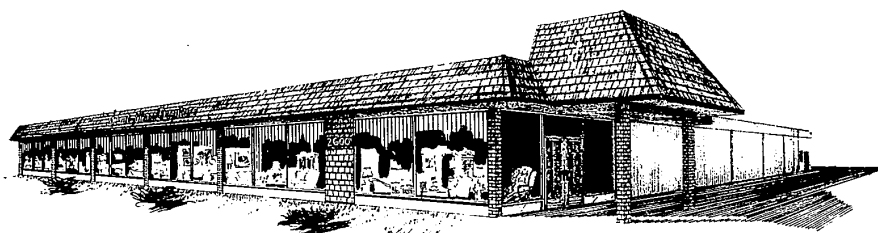
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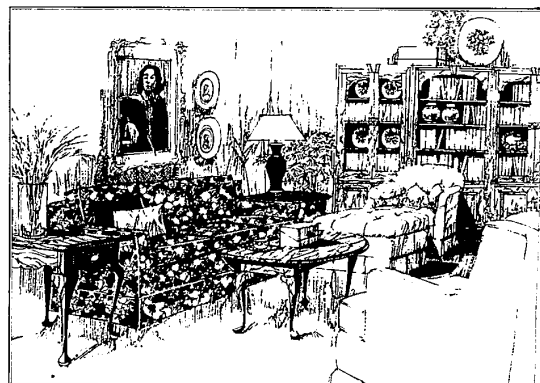
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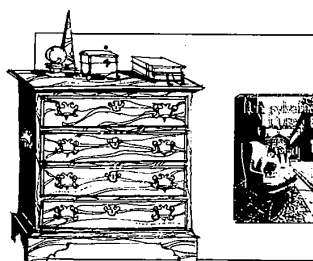


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