

# M-275

## Ecological or financial choice characterizes highway alternatives

This is the second of three articles by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) analyzing alternatives to the M-275 freeway, cancelled in 1977 by the former State Highway Commission. The project will be the subject of a public hearing Sept. 26 in the Oakland County Board of Commissioners' auditorium. The views are MDOT's.

The M-275 freeway alignment was located away from existing roads and area development to minimize adverse impacts on the population of the region. Subsequently, the alignment was further refined and interchanges were altered to reduce the impact upon the natural environment.

The original freeway alignment has been modified to completely miss the so-called "black spruce bog" near Maple Road. Also, the interchange at Commerce Road was relocated in the plan so that the alignment could be shifted to avoid the Pelletier Recreation Unit and to reduce the land area needed from the Dodge Park No. 5. This change would reduce the highway right-of-way by approximately 10 acres in Dodge Park No. 5 and 2.7 acres in the Pelletier Unit.

About 92 acres of the existing 194 acres would be acquired from the Dodge No. 5 unit. Of this 92 acres, 33 would be severed from the rest of the park.

The severed land would be made available to local governments for recreational purposes. The 92 acres, taken from Dodge Park No. 5, would be replaced by 173 acres at the Proud Lake Recreation Area, as agreed with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The MDOT had already acquired this replacement land before the cancellation of the M-275 project.

Although the alignment has been changed to reduce the impact on the environment, the alignment would still cross the Dodge Park No. 5 and would affect some wetland areas located between M-59 and I-75. The road would be constructed on new alignment, thereby impacting the habitat of plants and animals not previously disturbed.

### B. MCCONNELL BOULEVARD

The concept of Alternate B, known as the McConnell "Compromise Proposal," was developed by a group composed of citizens and local officials headed by Oakland County Commissioner Robert McConnell, R-Farmington Hills.

The alignment would connect to the existing interchange complex of I-275/I-96/I-696, follow along the Haggerty Road corridor for about five miles then proceed along the corridor of the freeway to M-59. The route would continue across M-59 on a reduced roadway cross-section to White Lake Road to provide service to the Pontiac Lake State Recreation Area.

The curvilinear alignment was developed to provide angles of crossing at intersections as near to perpendicular as possible. The road would be developed as a six-lane boulevard with an 845-foot landscaped median, shoulders, bicycle path, and continuous landscaped earth berms along each side of the roadway.

The facility would have limited access right-of-way to restrict strip development and would cross intersecting roads at grade. These intersections would reduce capacity and safety and would increase vehicular user costs, gasoline consumption, and trip time as compared to a freeway located in the same corridor.

The route would have to be extended eventually from M-59 to I-75 to fulfill the regional trunkline system requirements of the state. The impact on Dodge Park No. 5 and the environment would be similar to that of the freeway.

### C. ROSMAN ALTERNATIVE

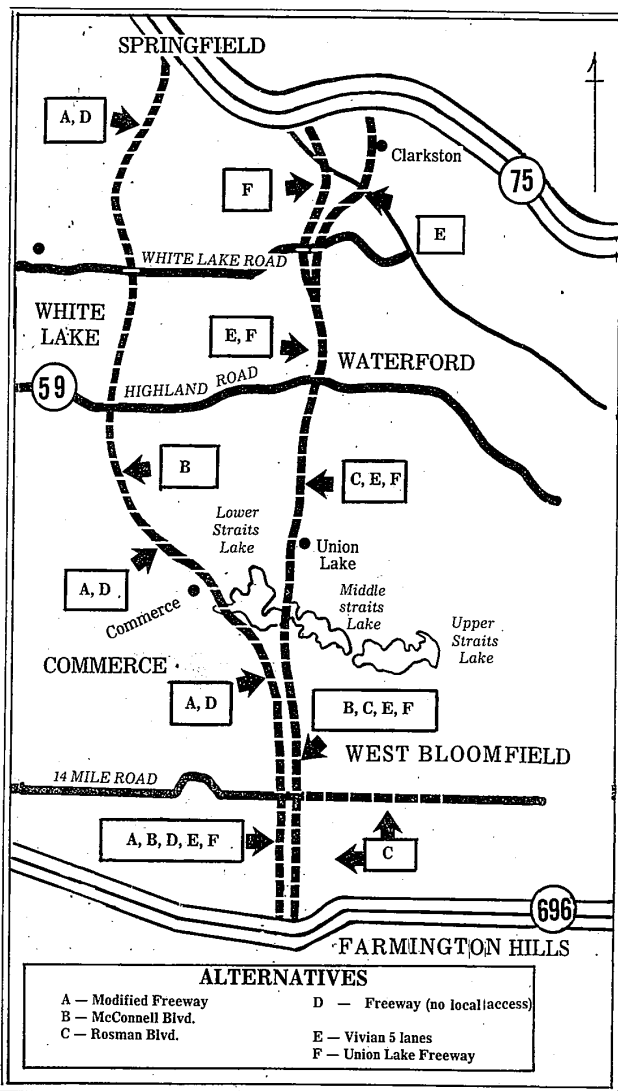
This proposal was developed by the citizens' group "Citizens in Opposition to M-275" chaired by Steven Rosman.

The proposed alignment would not provide a connection to the I-96/I-275/I-696 interchange complex. A connection to the major arterial network would be provided instead via 14 Mile Road and Northwestern Highway.

Alternative C would be developed as a six-lane boulevard from 12 Mile Road to 14 Mile Road along Haggerty Road, a six-lane boulevard from 14 Mile to M-59 with a reduced seven-lane section through the village of Union Lake, and a six-lane boulevard along 14 Mile Road between Haggerty Road and Northwestern.

Access to the new facility would be allowed for existing commercial and industrial establishments but all abutting vacant land and residential parcels would be purchased. Intersections would be at grade and no bicycle path would be constructed.

A summary of the estimated displacements of residential, commercial, and publicly owned properties and the estimated costs of right-of-way and construction are shown. The McConnell Boulevard (Alternate B) and Rosman Boulevard (Alternate C) extend only to M-59 while Alternates A, D, E, and F extend to I-75. Therefore, a comparison of total displacements and costs is not meaningful.



This map by the staff of the Michigan Department of Transportation shows the six routes it studied as

alternatives to the original M-275 freeway plan cancelled in 1977.

This alternative would be located in a corridor that has already been developed. Therefore, the impact on the natural environment would be less than on Alternates A or B because the natural environment has already been impacted.

However, the route would require the displacement of

242 residences and 60 commercial establishments, about five times as many displacements as the freeway would cause. Also, the safety and capacity of traffic operations would be reduced due to the free access provision for commercial and industrial properties and the numerous at grade intersections at crossroads.

Comments rendered by the attorney general in a memorandum of July 26, 1978, cast doubt on the "legality" of the proposal to purchase vacant and residential land for a partial limited-access facility, especially if the owners challenge necessity.

Therefore, it appears if this alternative is selected that this alternative would need to be studied further to determine if all of the right-of-way should be purchased limited access or if frontage roads should be incorporated into the plan.

The lack of a connection to the existing I-275/I-96/I-696 interchange and the termination of the alignment at M-59 are basic elements of Alternative C that are in conflict with regional, trunkline needs and plans. The road would mainly serve local traffic movements.

### D. FREEWAY WITH NO LOCAL ACCESS

This alternative was developed within the department in response to the concern that with increased accessibility, a faster rate of growth than is presently occurring would be induced within the study area.

The alignment and design criteria would be identical to the freeway Alternative A, but would have only one interchange constructed initially (at M-59) between I-96 and I-75. Right-of-way would be purchased for other interchanges but the construction would not be implemented.

As normal growth continues, access could be granted to serve the development that has taken place within local county and regional governmental ascertain the need and formally request the construction of ramps.

The concept, while attempting to minimize the out-migration from the central city, would prohibit or restrict the use of the facility to the local people in the area through which the freeway passes.

It is unlikely that the local people would be satisfied with this compromise proposal, which would have the environmental disadvantages of the freeway but would not provide relief to the existing overloaded local highway network.

### E. VIVIAN ALTERNATE

The concept of this alternative was suggested by Commissioner (Walter E.) Vivian (of Ann Arbor). This highway would have a five-lane pavement extending from the I-96/I-275/I-696 interchange complex northerly along existing roads where possible to the interchange of M-15 at I-75 near Clarkston. The right-of-way would be kept to a minimum through the use of curb and gutter and there would be free access to abutting properties.

An option of this alternate would provide for the northward extension of the M-275 freeway approximately five miles to the vicinity of Oakley Park Road, where it would continue as a five-lane, free access roadway to M-15 in Clarkston.

Provision would also be made for purchasing right-of-way for the longer range extension of the freeway north of Oakley Park Road to I-75 along the location of Alternate A. This type of highway would provide state trunkline service through the area but the free access provision would accelerate strip commercial development.

The capacity and safety of the facility would continue to decrease as the development and traffic demand increase.

The village of Clarkston has indicated opposition to any expansion of the existing M-15 route which would be incorporated into the alignment through the community. If this alternative is chosen, further study would be required to determine an acceptable connection to I-75, probably outside of Clarkston.

### F. UNION LAKE FREEWAY

This alternative was developed subsequent to a meeting of the Governor's Community Development Cabinet. The facility would consist of a six-lane freeway located in the same general corridor as the Rosman-Vivian alignments.

The last article will discuss the federal review and MDOT's own staff recommendations.

ALTERNATE	Length (Miles)	Displacements			Total Cost In \$1,000s		
		Res.	Comm.	Public	ROW	CONST.	TOTAL
A. Freeway	21.9	74	7	1	15,526	82,720	98,246
B. McConnell Blvd.	13.9 (a)	33	3	2	6,615	39,351	45,966
C. Rosman Blvd.	15.8 (b)	242	60	1	31,868	35,928	67,796
D. Freeway w/o Local Access	21.9	74	7	1	15,526	75,130	90,656
E. Vivian-5 Lanes	17.1 (c)	162	54	2	18,542	34,819	53,361
F. Union Lake Freeway	18.5	261	110	4	35,800	106,748	142,548

(a) The Mc Connell Boulevard extending from I-96 to M-59.

(b) The Rosman Boulevard extending from 12 Mile Road to M-59 and along 14 Mile Road from Haggerty Road to Northwestern Highway.

(c) The Vivian Alternate, extending from I-96 to M-15 south of Clarkston.

## 'Saver' no savior for gas guzzlers

Most drivers would like to find a way — any way — to save gasoline because saving gas saves money.

With the cost of gas rising steadily, manufacturers of so-called "gas saving" devices are stepping up their sales campaigns. The Better Business Bureau warns motorists that most of these products do not live up to the claims made for them.

Many claims are exaggerated and misleading, and data offered to substantiate them have often been inaccurate, outdated or otherwise insufficient, said the BBB. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has tested many devices for which fuel-saving claims are made and has found little significant mpg improvement — not enough any way to justify the cost of purchase and installation.

Gas-saving products on the market can be divided into three categories: Friction-reducing lubricants, fuel catalysts, and mechanical devices.

**FRICION-REDUCING** oils are either all synthetic or have a petroleum base.

The synthetic additives in the lubricant reduce engine friction, thus increasing fuel economy. Manufacturers claim that these products improve performance significantly. Car owners

should check the owner's manual to make sure their cars can accept a friction-reducing oil and whether the longer periods recommended between oil changes will void their new car warranty.

Fuel catalysts are added to the gasoline in a car's tank on the theory that they break down hydrocarbons and increase mileage. However, experts agree it is probably better to have a tune-up.

**AN ARRAY** of mechanical devices — water or alcohol injector systems, replacement distributor rotors, "miracle" spark plugs, air jets, etc. — have been tested by the EPA. The results: None provides significant improvement in miles per gallon performance.

**MEANWHILE**, there are proven methods drivers can use now to save gasoline. These include:

- Reducing speed and observing the 55 mph speed limit, speed reduction from 60 to 50 mph cuts gas consumption by 10 percent.
- Turning off the engine if it will be idle more than a minute.
- Keeping the car well-tuned. Regular tune-ups can mean an immediate 9-15 percent improvement in gasoline mileage.