

# Public opinion: It could decide M-275's future

By TOM LONERGAN

**Public opinion.**  
It could sway the Michigan Transportation Commission's upcoming decision on the proposed modified M-275 freeway through west Oakland County. And most of the 300 people who packed the county Board of Commissioners Auditorium Wednesday for a public hearing on M-275 favored those speakers who suggested the freeway be scrapped again in favor of improving local roads in the lake-laden, developing area.

The six-member commission also heard from local community, county and business officials who urged them to proceed with the modified freeway, which would run from I-696/I-96 in Novi north to I-75.

THE COMMISSION plans to render the third — and maybe final — decision on the controversial freeway before the end of the year.

Planned for more than 15 years, the freeway has been scrapped twice by the old state highway commission, but was resurrected last year by state highway engineers as one of five alternatives.

The transportation commission, which replaced the highway commission this year, has three new members who will be making their first decision on M-275.

The 22-mile "modified" M-275 would cost nearly \$100 million. When it was last cancelled in January, 1977, it carried a price tag of nearly \$70 million.

WHILE THE commission didn't dis-

cuss the issue, Chairman Hannes Meyers Jr., in a response to Oakland County Commissioner Robert Gorsline, R-Milford, indicated he may again vote to cancel the freeway.

Gorsline said the commission should stop "teasing" freeway proponents, like his cat teases a bird, and "build M-275."

Calling the analogy unfair, Meyers responded:

"I'm becoming more convinced that M-275 is like the legendary cat with nine lives. We have killed it twice and now you want to bring it back so we can kill it again."

County Executive Daniel Murphy, citing safety and need factors, was the first of several elected officials testifying in favor of the freeway.

The congestion and new development

in west Oakland was not caused by a freeway, the Republican county executive said.

"We have not built M-275, but the people came anyway," he added, noting the western population will increase by 50,000 to 250,000 by 1990.

"We should hear no more of the delusions that we should stop growth by not building freeways."

But the freeway will accelerate the area's growth, countered Commissioner Lawrence Pernick, of Southfield.

"The only real change that will occur as a result of this freeway proposal is more and more urban sprawl," Pernick said.

"Urban freeways were instrumental in destroying the City of Detroit, while at the same time building the cities of Southfield and Troy, said the county

Democratic leader.

He said more freeways will make Livingston and Lapeer counties "the communities of the future" at the expense of the southern Oakland cities and Pontiac.

Among state legislators who testified, State Rep. Alice Tomboulis, D-Rochester, and Sen. Kerry Karmmer, D-Pontiac, opposed the modified freeway while State Reps. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield, and Claude Trim, D-Detroit, supported it.

ONE FREEWAY opposition group, the Northwestern Coalition, urged the state to fund local road improvements, since local communities have long relied on the state highway department.

"What local communities want is relief that the state highway department

says will come only from a freeway," said George Snyder, of Birmingham, the group's spokesman. Providing money to upgrade local roads is "less damaging than any of the proposals," he added.

"A mini, junior or modified freeway will never be built, and we all know it," said Snyder, citing federal laws protecting the environment. Snyder said the west Oakland area is "the most environmentally sensitive area in south-east Michigan."

The federal Department of Interior's dim view of the original M-275's impact on the lakes-recreation area was influential in the freeway's cancellation. Freeway opponents seem confident the modified freeway will also be nixed for ecology reasons.

## Into Intuit art

### It's a cold research project

When she announced her plans to spend six months alone in the Arctic to research Inuit (Eskimo) art, "Some of my friends thought I'd taken leave of my senses," said Marion Jackson, assistant dean of the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

And, in a way, she had. In the scholarly tradition, Ms. Jackson had left behind her Midwestern perceptions of the world in order to better understand the Inuit artists' way of life and view of the world, which affects their art.

Ms. Jackson, whose task of profiling the artists was supported by the Canadian government, is coordinator for exhibitions of Inuit prints and sculpture Sept. 16 to Oct. 14 at the U-M Museum of Art.

She was instrumental in negotiating the Ann Arbor showing of "The Inuit Print," a major Inuit graphics show organized by the Canadian National Museum Programmes. She has also served as guest curator for the exhibition "Inuit Sculpture," which features items from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene B. Power of Ann Arbor.

Just as Ms. Jackson is telescoping the academic examination of Inuit art, Mr. and Mrs. Power were responsible for introducing the art objects. At one time, the art works were disdained as "handicrafts" in this country.

In 1952, the Power family became acquainted with Inuit sculpture through their friend James Houston, a Canadian artist to whom Power attributes the discovery of Inuit carving.

Power and Houston were interested in generating a steady income for the Inuit. So in 1953 they created a nonprofit corporation, the still operative Eskimo Art, Inc., to distribute the art. The company was established in Ann Arbor as the first major U.S. distributor for the sculpture.

THE POWERS' efforts resulted not only in the dissemination of Inuit sculpture, but in its recognition as legitimate art. Power appealed to U.S. customs to import the works duty-free, which involved their reclassification as art.

"They refused at first," Power said, "because they said the Inuit were not graduates of a recognized art school."

Power, who is U-M Regent Emeritus, also initiated the first major U.S. exhibition of Inuit sculpture circulated by the Smithsonian Institution. The traveling show, assembled during the 1950s, ran for seven years.

Jackson and Power explained their attraction to Inuit art in similar terms: "I liked the sculpture's simplicity," Power said, "The way the Eskimos instilled in their carvings a kind of essence of what they are portraying in stone."

"I was intrigued by what inspired, what motivated them," said Jackson, the art historian.

But when Jackson questioned the graphic artists about their artistic motivations — or, more fundamentally, about why they draw the way they do — artists would commonly reply something like: "The penil moves my hand."

Likewise, Power said, the stone carvers often allow their medium to dictate their theme: "The sculptors say they wait for the stone to tell them what is in it."

The sculptors, who might contemplate their unheaven stone for several days, also carve with the grain of the rock, a technique that gives the impression of movement and invites touch, Power said.

On a larger scale, Inuit artists also reflect the "grain" of their environment. In their prints and drawings, figures of animals, fantasy figures and humans, Jackson said, are often presented on blank white backgrounds.

The lack of points of reference in the environment during the long Arctic winters is mirrored in these pictures, in which objects often appear "spatially distorted" to the Western eye, she said.

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