

Small cars nip Road Commission gasoline taxes

By TOM LONERGAN

Small cars may be the wave of the future, but they are none too popular with Oakland County Road Commission officials.

The lighter, better mileage cars are affecting the road commission's main revenue source — state gasoline and weight taxes.

The road commission's \$34.9 million proposed budget "reflects a change in priorities and recognition of the fact that greater percentages of revenues have to go into maintenance, traffic and safety," Road Commission Managing Director John Grubba said at a public hearing on the budget last week.

"THAT DECISION, coupled with the fact revenues are not increasing significantly, is at the expense of the construction program," he said.

The Board of County Road Commissioners has tentatively set Dec. 10 for a vote on both budgets. At last week's hearing, several rural supervisors and Rep. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield, praised road commission work.

"Revenues and expenditures are down 7 percent from 1979, or \$2.7 million," Grubba said. "This is due primarily to greatly reduced amounts of federal and local matching funds anticipated."

Grubba said revenues from the state-collected gas and weight tax will be about 2.5 percent higher in 1980.

The road commission's \$10.4 million construction program is \$6.8 percent smaller than this year's \$14.1 million program. "Only \$8.8 million is available for construction in the proposed

1980 budget," Grubba said. Much of the remainder is budgeted for right-of-way acquisition.

THE ROAD commission gets 65 percent of its budget revenue from the county's share of state collected gas and weight taxes.

The revenue is derived from the 11 cent per gallon state gas tax and the weight tax paid at annual vehicle registration.

As gasoline consumption has decreased this year and cars have become lighter, the state-county shared pool has failed to grow rapidly, despite a recent 2 cents a gallon increase in the gasoline tax.

"The increasing proportion of vehicles that are smaller and lighter means less fuel is sold and the weight tax is less," Grubba said.

On the other side of the coin, "smaller and lighter cars find poor (road) conditions more troublesome than larger cars," he added.

ROAD COMMISSION vice chairman John Gnaou, said the "weight and gas tax will not suffice in answering the problems we have. The way it's now set up, it's not going to work."

"The only way we're going to get better roads," Gnaou added, "is not to take more money from paychecks but a better distribution" of state revenues for transportation.

State law now allocates 10 percent of gas and weight tax revenues to public transportation. The policy was embedded into a constitutional amendment approved by voters last November.

WANTED: Computer whiz

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Demand for skilled computer specialists has shot up 21.1 percent in 1979 over '78. And overall salary increases have climbed almost 13 percent over one year ago.

This is the picture painted from a survey conducted by professional employment firms in all 100 major U.S. talent markets.

Programmers are the specialists who feed the computers the "instructions" they need to perform their magic. In the tri-county area, demand for programmers is up 42 percent and for software and systems pro-

grammers 36.8 percent.

Systems analysts are the specialists who determine how their computer can be applied to solve their companies' problems. Demand for them is up 31 percent in the three-county area, according to Jo Keifer, data processing consultant of Professional Personnel Consultants, Inc. in Southfield.

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