

Survey shows county residents want better roads

By TOM LONERGAN

In the wake of last year's tax revolt, a recent survey shows nearly half of Oakland County residents are willing to pay more taxes for better roads.

And that's "surprising," according to a spokesman for the Oakland County Road Commission.

The road commission this week released the results of a random telephone survey of 900 county voting-age residents conducted by Market Opinion Research during February and March.

About half (47 percent) of those surveyed said they would pay \$20 more a year for county road repair and maintenance. An equal number opposed paying more for road improvements.

MORE THAN two-thirds (69 percent) of those surveyed want a greater proportion of county tax dollars spent on road maintenance.

The support for better road maintenance, even if it costs more, confirmed what the road commission had been finding in its last several year-end surveys, said county road commission spokesman Dennis Pajot.

The \$20 figure posed in the survey would be the amount of extra taxes paid yearly on a house with a market value of \$40,000 if there were a one-mill property tax for roads.

Even though the road commission has no plans to propose a millage, Pajot added, "It's been the track record of this administration not to let studies sit on the shelf."

He said the 47 percent favoring extra spending for roads is a large enough group for support. According to the survey, those willing to pay a county road tax are also more likely to rate the commission's job performance good, drive more than 15,000 miles a year and be male.

A large portion (61 percent) of the commission's \$37.5 million budget is from state gas and vehicle weight taxes.

THE SURVEY, which cost \$17,500, was the first conducted by a polling company for the commission.

An additional survey, also conducted by Market Opinion Research, of county "opinion leaders" cost \$9,000. That survey of 150 persons (elected officials, political party, business, labor and civic club leaders) had the same results as the resident survey.

Pajot said the commission has \$11,500 remaining in its budget for a

follow-up survey later this year.

Nearly two-thirds of county residents favored the new state transportation formula, passed by voters last fall, which allocates 10 percent of the gas and weight taxes for non-road purposes, such as public transportation.

Seventeen percent of those surveyed said "inadequate mass transportation" was the most serious transportation problem in the county, followed by road conditions.

Last month the road commission released survey findings on mass transit shortly before the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) approved a combined bus and light rail

(both subway and aerial) plan along the Woodward corridor.

The most preferred forms of mass transit among county residents, according to the survey, are expanded bus service and car pools. The least preferred is the subway in Detroit.

An expanded Dial-A-Ride system was most supported by those over 55.

REGARDING STATE highway construction projects, the survey found:

- 76 percent favor completing I-696 from Telegraph Road to I-75.
- 57 percent favor extending M-275 north from I-96 in western Oakland County.

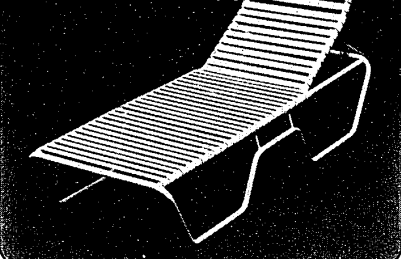
- 58 percent favor widening M-59 west of Pontiac.

- 58 percent favor widening Big Beaver Road in Troy to a four-lane boulevard from Coolidge Road to Dequindre in Macomb County.

- 46 percent favor extending Northwestern Highway as a freeway.

Asked what were the most important problems facing the county at this time, 37 percent said transportation problems, with the most frequent response being road repairs and chuck-holes.

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