

In October

Decision due on road designation

By Mary Lou Callaway  
special writer

The Oakland County Road Commission (OCRC) will make its decision by Oct. 15 on designating Halstead and Walnut Lake roads natural beauty roads.

Brian Blasing, OCRC environmental concerns coordinator, told about 20 people who attended the public hearing in West Bloomfield Sept. 16 that he has received only two objections to the plan.

Clerk Betty Sue Dugree submitted 23 letters written to the township in support of the road redesignation and none in opposition.

Both the township board and planning commission support the proposal for Walnut Lake from Haggerty to Halstead and Halstead from Walnut Lake to 14 Mile.

Trustee Raymond Holland, who also serves on the planning commission, and Dugree gathered the petition signatures calling for the hearing.

The state's Natural Beauty Road Act 150 sets guidelines to identify and preserve certain county-local roads having unusual or outstanding natural beauty such as native trees and vegetation.

Industrial zoning along a half mile of Walnut Lake Road, east of Haggerty, can be planned to protect the road, Holland said.

The township's roadscape plan adopted in 1980 states both roads need

the protection of the natural beauty classification.

HOLLAND AND SEVERAL residents described the 40-50-foot-high hardwood trees, marshes and wildlife refuges along the roadsides as unique in the county.

"I counted 254 trees along the road. I've seen deer, fox, raccoon, beaver and so many bird species you can't believe it," Holland said.

Both roads are under county jurisdiction.

Frank Meyers, executive director of the Intercounty Highway Commission, in a letter to OCRC, called the designation "unwise" because of the lack of road facilities in the area, possible future development and the 120-foot right-of-way plan.

A Farmington Hills resident opposed the redesignation of Halstead because it is a main route to Henry Ford Hospital, he said.

Supervisor John Doherty, who did not attend the hearing, also has expressed doubts about redesignation.

"As development takes place, it will be more and more difficult to get emergency trucks through there," he said.

"I'M NOT AGAINST the goal, but it could create impediments in the industrial zone. It's not good planning. Trees can be preserved without the designation," he said.

Several subdivision representatives, the League of Women Voters and Concerned Citizens for West Bloomfield submitted letters asking for the preservation designation for both roads.

Comparisons were made with Bloomfield Township's two natural beauty roads, Echo and Wing Lake.

But OCRC representatives pointed out those Bloomfield Township roads are maintained by that township which has a voted millage for road improvement and maintenance.

West Bloomfield has no road tax, although Holland said someday it may have to ask voters for road funding.

Several residents complained the

county fails to maintain the two gravel roads under discussion.

Even if the two roads are reclassified by the county, they could still be paved, Blasing told the audience.

If approved, the roads could lose the natural beauty designation in the future if they become unsafe because of heavy traffic, he added.

Peter Urick called Walnut Lake Road a quagmire of mud in rainy weather and a dust bowl in dry periods.

"The road commission has been thoroughly negligent," Urick charged.

OCRC Transportation Director William Fogini replied that "we just don't have the money without matching funds (from the township)."

Teenager killed on Orchard Lake

A 19-year-old Waterford woman died Friday morning after she was struck by a van while attempting to change a flat tire on Orchard Lake Road, south of Maple.

Karen Lynn Wise was taken to Providence Hospital in Southfield, where she died. Death was the result of a basal skull fracture, according to the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office.

Driver of the van which hit Ms. Wise's van was Christopher Joseph Muller of West Bloomfield.

He approached Ms. Wise's van from the same direction, reportedly struck her van, veered to the right and hit her, police said. The van was parked in the curb lane with its hazard lights operating, a witness said.

No charges have been filed. The accident remains under investigation.

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