

State helps ease highway traffic troubles

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Roads — their condition, in particular — are drawing attention of Farmington Hills' officials.

The City Council last week gave its nod to get the ball rolling on several improvements targeted for major thoroughfares — Northwestern Highway, 12 Mile, and the M-102/Grand River interchange.

The city will spend approximately \$8,000 as its share of costs for the estimated \$455,000 construction of 14 new crossovers (traffic loops) along Northwestern. The federal government will pay 85 percent, or \$386,800. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will pay approximately \$50,000.

With the new crossovers, targeted for next spring, motorists will be prohi-

bited from making left turns at the major roads such as Middlebelt and 13 Mile.

"The exact locations (of the new crossovers) are subject to variation," said City Manager William Costick.

"ALTHOUGH THIS will not solve the traffic problems, it will provide better access to the businesses and reduce conflicts and allow better movement of the through-traffic," said Farmington Hills Director of Public Services Thomas Blasell.

Another project that city officials are working on is the revival of long-standing plans to reconstruct the M-102/Grand River interchange. Council adopted a resolution to be sent to MDOT requesting a widening project at the interchange.

Although widening was a project MDOT officials had seriously consid-

ered in the late 1970s, it was dropped in 1980.

"It is our understanding that the highway department dropped the program later that year because of lack of available funding and the state of the economy that was being experienced," Blasell said.

SINCE 1980, the Oakland County Road Commission and the city have improved the 10 Mile/Grand River intersection and widened 10 Mile to five lanes. Before that, Grand River also was widened to five lanes, east of the interchange.

But traffic has increased, particularly on roads — Halsted, Freedom and Grand River — leading to the interchange. "The result is a bottleneck created by the turning movement onto M-102 from the surface system. Therefore, the need for the reconstruction of

the interchange has become acute," Blasell said.

In anticipation of future widening, including a boulevard on 12 Mile, west of Farmington Road, council approved an engineering survey to determine the legal boundaries of both the East and West Farmington cemeteries. The survey is expected to cost a maximum \$4,900.

Although the city does not have adequate legal surveys of the two historic cemeteries, the surveys — particularly of West Farmington Cemetery at the corner of 12 and Halsted — will become important if graves must be relocated to accommodate the proposed widening project.

FARMINGTON HILLS also will again participate in Oakland County's tri-party road improvement program. Although city officials last year bid for improvements of Orchard Lake at Oakland Community College and addition of a passing lane at Kiltartan and Middlebelt, bids came in over budget and the project was postponed.

This year, city officials have asked the road commission to proceed with both projects, plus the widening of Orchard Lake, with the addition of a center left-turn lane leading to 11 Mile. Under the tri-party program, Oakland County Board of Commissioners, the road commission and the city each pay equal shares of the project's cost. Last year, county commissioners and the road commission each contributed \$500,000 to the program. This year, the county has recommended a 50-percent increase, or a \$750,000 contribution.

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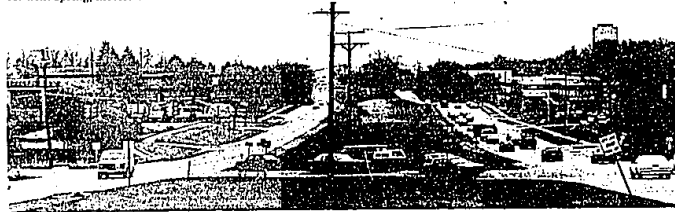
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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Michigan Department of Transportation officials are working with Farmington Hills to install 14 additional traffic loops along Northwestern Highway to relieve turning congestion at intersections.

tions such as 13 Mile (above). The loops will also alleviate bi-directional turning traffic at major intersections.

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