

Money matters

Proposed tax would benefit roads in Hills

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills motorists can look forward to smoother, less congested travel within the next couple of years — if they're willing to pay for it.

Of the city's \$19.5 million 1986-87 budget, Farmington Hills City Council allocated \$2 million of a total \$9 million city share of a three-year road improvement program.

Voters will go to the polls Tuesday, Sept. 23, to consider financing the remaining \$7 million city share of the road program with general obligation bonds.

The \$2 million is the yield of 1 mill (\$1.2 million) that would be combined with \$750,000 in the city's existing major road budget. The city currently levies 9.8 mills.

The designated 1 mill for roads and accompanying bond issue is not designed as an alternative to the city's unsuccessful bid to form a Tax Increment Financing Authority to pay for improvements along the 12 Mile corridor and I-696. Twelve Mile and I-696 projects that would have been financed through TIFA are not included in the city's three-year major road program.

The city's road program identifies and lists in priority a total of approximately \$14 million of improvements. The 1 mill and bond issue addresses only the city's share of the estimated costs. City officials expect that non-

city costs will be paid for by the Oakland County Road Commission, other communities, such as Farmington, Novi and West Bloomfield Township, which share roads scheduled for improvements, and some highway grants.

CONSTRUCTION Of the projects has been spread over a three-year period, with the first set of improvements scheduled for the 1986-87 fiscal year.

The \$2 million will pay for the city's share of projects scheduled for 1986-87. That would leave \$7 million of the three-year road program still to be financed.

Although the city could pay its \$9 million share of the improvements on a pay-as-you-go basis, levying 1 mill annually, it would take about seven years to complete all the proposed projects.

The other financing method preferred by city officials is to use \$2 million to finance the first year of improvements and ask voters in September to support a \$7 million general obligation bond issue to pay for the remaining two years of the program.

If voters approve the requested 10-year bond issue, only .75-mill would be required annually to retire the debt, according to City Manager William Costick. But with a general obligation bond — issued on the full faith and credit of the city — officials can pledge whatever millage is required to retire the debt — even if it is above the city's 10-mill charter limit.

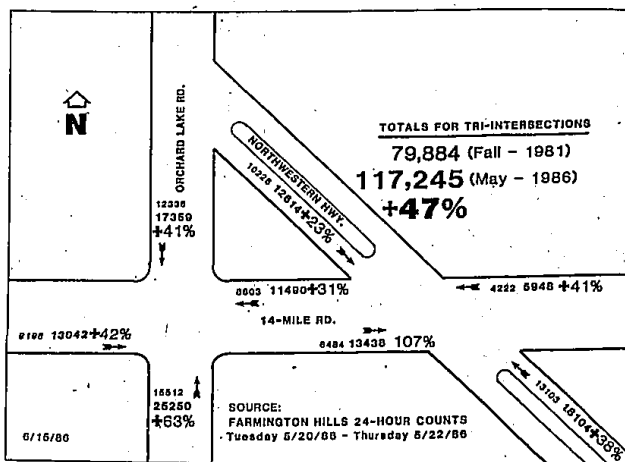
BECAUSE OF the 1978 state constitution tax limitation amendment (Headlee Amendment), the city's charter tax limit is at 1.8 mills — exactly what the city is levying in 1986-87.

The three-year road improvement program would begin this year and include the following projects:

- Widening of Pebble Creek Bridge on 12 Mile, west of Inkster.
- Orchard Lake Road widening, 10 Mile to Grand River.
- Improvements to the 13 Mile and Haggerty Intersection.
- Paving 13 Mile, from Drake to Halsted.
- Widening and resurfacing 14 Mile, from Orchard Lake to Farmington Roads.
- Straightening the 14 Mile curve, near Inkster.
- Widening 13 Mile at Northwestern Highway.
- Installation of traffic signals throughout the city.

Although widening of 14 Mile is included on this year's list, it more than likely would not be started because rights-of-way must be purchased. Farmington Hills also intends to ask West Bloomfield Township to pay a share of the improvements.

In place of the 14 Mile project, the city will pave Drake Road, from 13 to 14 Mile. Paving of 13 Mile, from Drake to Halsted, is also under way.



Traffic counts through the Intersection of Northwestern Highway, 14 Mile Road and Orchard Lake Road show a 47 percent hike, according to recently published figures. The most recent counts are attributed to the city of Farmington Hills May 22-24 and compared with past Oakland County Road Commission figures.

Better roads could require a tax increase

By Mary Lou Callaway
special writer

So far, it's just talk, but voters could be asked to raise taxes for road improvements in November by both Oakland County and West Bloomfield.

"If we're going to have roads, it seems to me we have to fund them. We throw money at every other problem we've got except roads. You start putting cement down and pay for right-of-way and you're talking a lot of dough," said West Bloomfield Township Supervisor John Doherty.

County sources report they will be \$700 million short to pay for the road improvements local governments say they need over the next

decade. In April, West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills held a joint meeting of their officials with state and county road agencies to explore mutual traffic problems.

It was decided then that a Joint Road Study Committee (JRSC) of 13 be formed with five representatives each for West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills, plus one each member from the Oakland County Road Commission, Michigan Transportation Department and SEMCOG (Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments).

MEANWHILE, Gateway-PLUS, a resident's group, was formed because of concerns over a proposed

new zoning district which would affect the Northwestern-Orchard Lake Road-14 Mile Road intersections at the entrances to the city and the township.

They asked for updated traffic counts from the county because the last available figures were five years old.

Speaking to the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce June 16, Gateway president Ken Poye released statistics compiled by Farmington Hills. The county, says Poye, will start gathering their figures next month for adjacent areas.

Counts of increased traffic through the three intersections show a 47-percent hike since 1981

in the numbers of vehicles. (See chart.)

A Gateway sponsored survey shows 90-percent of those who responded to a mail query said roads and traffic congestion bother them. Of those, 61 percent said they would support a "reasonable" millage for road improvements.

DOHERTY SAYS he is suggesting the Joint Road Study Committee collect and compile data and assess the effects on the overall traffic picture. "We want to know what effect the Haggerty Road improvements now underway will have, for example, on Drake and Farmington roads."

The West Bloomfield Township

Board has appointed Poye as its citizen-at-large member of the joint roads study committee. He will serve alongside Doherty, township planning director Thomas Bird and planning commissioner Peter Pekala.

Still to be selected is either a township board member or their designee.

Doherty and Township Treasurer Dorothy McIntosh both said they believe it shouldn't be a board member. But a selection was deferred until vacationing trustee Gordon Allardice, who had asked to be on the committee, could be present.

CONCERNED CITIZENS for West Bloomfield co-presidents Lor-

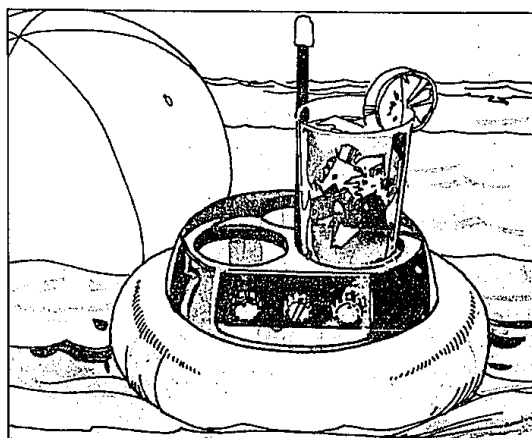
na McEwen and Mary Hoxie had asked to have one of their members appointed as citizen-at-large.

Later McEwen said even without a formal role, "We will participate. We will attend the meetings which Mr. Doherty said will be public."

According to the JRSC implementation memo, the meetings will be held during the day when staff resources from each community and agency are available.

Doherty expects the committee to hold its first session next month. Farmington Hills members appointed so far include City Manager William Costick, Councilman Terry Sever, Public Services Director Thomas Blazell and citizen-at-large Ed Jacques.

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Even if all questions concerning the arthritis aren't answered, the physician can wholeheartedly encourage the patient to undertake an active life. In the case of aching joints, doctor's knowledge of what is not the cause is almost as useful as arriving at a precise diagnosis.

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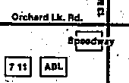
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