

Grubba fires back at Detroit planners

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

John Grubba, wearing a crisply starched white shirt and tie and sitting behind his desk as managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission, doesn't look like the fighting type.

But Ronald Hewitt, director of the Detroit Planning Department, has Grubba fighting mad, and he's not going to take it any more.

Hewitt has been sharply critical of plans for the new Oakland Technological Park in Rochester Hills.

Attacking the development as another example of "urban sprawl," Hewitt said in a recently released letter that traffic plans by the Michigan Department of Transportation for the park are "marginally inadequate to service morning peak inbound traffic loads" and "totally inadequate to service afternoon peak hour traffic loads."

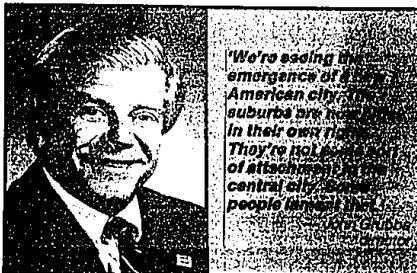
Oakland County Executive Dan Murphy shrugs off the letter as "sour grapes. There's no truth to that at all."

But Grubba wasn't about to shrug off Hewitt's letter during an interview Monday before the weekly public meeting of the road commission, which heard public opinion regarding the letter.

"It's more substantial than sour grapes," said Grubba. "I think the city of Detroit is pursuing policies that while aiming at the success and betterment of the city, are at the expense of other areas of the region."

The comments (by Hewitt) are accurate. Detroit wants to return to the '40s and '50s, when Detroit was the dominant economic center of the region. But since that time, things have changed dramatically

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'We're seeing the emergence of a new American city. The suburbs are now cities in their own rights. They're not some sort of attachment to the central city. Some people lament that. Urban sprawl — that's

of those new American cities is taxing the ability of local officials to deal with new problems.

In general, new development in Oakland County has far exceeded the infrastructure — sewers and highways. In particular, the new tech park is creating nightmares for the road commission, which in the face of declining gas-tax revenues must find ways of raising phenomenal sums of money for adequate roads.

(State estimates are that the 1,800-acre park in Rochester Hills will require \$100 million for Grubba says it will be \$100 to \$150 million.)

But he says they are problems that ultimately will be solved.

"Breakdowns (in the current highway system) are an opportunity for a breakthrough," said Grubba. "We can make roads that fit the concept of a new American city or we can get out of the way (for those who can). We're not going to turn back the hands of time."

According to a study by the road commission, which met last fall with leaders of all Oakland County mu-

nicipalities, demands on the highway system by countywide development will total \$740 million over the next 10 years. Grubba says of that total, \$110 million in funding has been identified, leaving a shortfall of \$630 million or \$63 million a year.

The county has been spending less than \$10 million a year in road development, merely a large drop in a huge bucket.

BECAUSE THE COMMISSION has no idea where it will get the money to finance such an ambitious project, Grubba says he would that no money has been allocated for the Technological Park project, either in the proposed 1987 budget (see related story) or in the three-year master plan for '87-'89.

Grubba said the commission is resisting pressure from Chrysler, which said it won't build its Chrysler Technology Center and Evaluation Track without firm road plans, and from the state to begin preliminary

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County panel denies funds for Tech Park

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

Oakland County road commissioners stressed at a public hearing Monday on their proposed budget for the fiscal year of 1987 that they have not begun action plans to widen roads near the proposed Oakland Technological Park in Rochester Hills.

The commissioners' planning director, John Grubba, told one Rochester Hills citizen that there was no money in the proposed budget or in a three-year master plan for any county spending to improve roads into the proposed 1,800-acre park.

"We may as well design a road system like we can't build as well as design a road system you don't like that we can't build," he said in a joking reference to the commission's quandary over where to get the \$740,000,000 in funds the

commission estimates will be needed for road improvements to keep pace with building development countywide over the next 10 years.

"Before we commit any money, you and your cities will have an opportunity to approve any plans," said Grubba. "Otherwise you'll sue and the project will get bogged down in suits and nobody wants that."

Grubba said that projects are included in the budget only when the source of financing is known. He said that the commission doesn't know where the money will come from to improve roads into the park, and has been able to identify only \$110,000,000 of the money that will be needed to improve roads countywide. (See related story.)

Grubba said that the road department has done no early-stage engi-

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