

\$740 million for roads? Oakland exploring

By Tim Richard staff writer
A year of missionary work is paying off for John Grubba and the Oakland County Road Commission. Other county officials, local chiefs and state lawmakers are openly discussing ways to raise more money for county roads.

"What do you want us to do?" asked county commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park, as the board's transportation committee met for two hours last week.
"Join with us in a plan to raise \$74 million a year for 10 years," replied Grubba, managing director of the Road Commission.

"Our total budget now is \$50-some million. Local officials have listed the needs at \$740 million over 10 years.

"IT'S A POLITICAL decision. It's time for all the political actors to get involved. We've offered leadership to any number of individuals — city managers, mayors and so on."
Grubba said the three-man board to which he reports soon will study the OCRS staff's tentative plan. He expects a decision in a matter of weeks.

But commissioner Alex Perinoff, D-Southfield, called raising \$74 million a year in new tax money "absolutely impossible."
And the solutions discussed by the

new six-member transportation committee involved only one-tenth of the \$74 million goal.

OVERSHADOWING the critical road money question is Oakland County's economic boom, which is straining the road system.
Joseph Joachim, economic development chief, reports that in 1986 Oakland accounted for 31 percent of all new private sector jobs in the state, 43 percent of all new office construction, 50 percent of all new hotel construction and 33 percent of all new industrial construction.
And more is on the way, according to County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, who is planning an economic outlook luncheon for Feb. 25.

HERE ARE some of the solutions county and local officials are looking at, along with pros and cons:

- State gasoline tax increases totaling six cents a gallon — two cents a year for three years. The Legislature could enact such an increase this year. County roads get a 39 percent cut and municipalities (cities and villages) a 21 percent cut. Each cent of increase would give Oakland about \$18 million.
- A formula change giving a larger-than-39-percent cut to "urban counties." These include Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Genesee.
- A countywide gasoline tax of one or two cents a gallon. Each penny would yield \$8 million revenue. Municipalities, however, may ask

for half that amount in return for their support at the polls.

Special assessments on business. Commissioner Anne Hobart, R-Waterford, noted it would require permissive state legislation.
Grubba was cool to the idea because "a special assessment is usable only where there's a benefit to property. Courts have said it is not to be used where the general benefit outweighs a special benefit."
"You can special-assess for county primary roads only where it (land use) is primarily residential. The law is pretty clear."

Business impact fees for such improvements as exit ramps, turn lanes, traffic signals and other uses. Sen. Richard Fessler, R-West

Bloomfield, has introduced permissive state legislation.

Grubba saw problems even with that. "The legal question is whether it's a tax or a fee. In California it's a tax. In Florida it's a fee. If it's a fee, it's imposed under the general police power. But in Michigan, county governments lack general police power."

In a memo, Grubba added, "We don't believe we can ask future developers to pay for problems created by past development."

Fessler, speaking later in the day to local officials, said his plan is to "give local units every option we can think of to raise new revenue. We have a golden opportunity."

Fessler: Demand state trunk lines quickly

By Tim Richard staff writer
Local officials will have to work quickly if they have any dream of

getting state trunk lines in western Oakland County in the next five years.
"We're going to have to work rather intensely the next few

weeks," said state Sen. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield, "because the train, plane or whatever will leave it's moving real fast."

Fessler, who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee, did most of the talking during a 90-minute forum with county and local officials last week in Pontiac. He urged them to pressure the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and other legislators to get trunk line designations written into law.

HIS VEHICLE will be an extension of the state gasoline tax law, which the '86 Legislature extended just to June 1, when it's due to expire.
"It will have a bill drafted by the first week of March — or earlier," Fessler said.
"I want to force MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation), in the boilerplate of the bill, to designate a trunk line from I-96 to M-59,"

he said. It would be in the corridor of the current two-lane Haggerty Road, which runs between Novi and Commerce on the west and Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield on the east.

While MDOT officials have committed to widening Haggerty to West Maple, he said. An interchange of Haggerty and I-96 is planned, and Fessler urged pressure to get it built.
"It would be 90-percent federal funding. The right-of-way is there. It's protected."

A SECOND trunk line Fessler is seeking to have written into the law would be the corridor of Milford Road from I-96 to M-59. "There's some question whether it would go

through or around Milford.

And the third trunk line would start at M-59, somewhere between Haggerty and Milford roads, and go north to the I-75 freeway in northern Oakland County.

"It's an absolute necessity. I-75 from Clarkston to Troy will be widened to four lanes. We have some of the largest state parks and metro-parks in that area."

DURING HIS two Senate and four House terms, Fessler has battled MDOT almost constantly for highway improvements in western Oakland County.

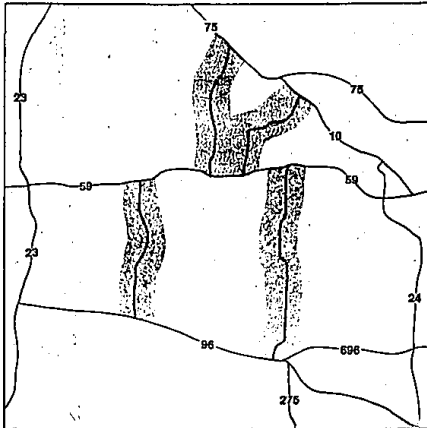
For years, the war swirled around a proposed M-275 freeway, which

would have run from I-96 at Haggerty northwesterly to I-75.

But environmental forces opposed the project, which would have run through the middle of the "lakes district" of Oakland County. The state Highway Commission in the Milliken administration finally buried M-275.

This year Fessler organized a task force of local officials to seek alternatives — hence, the three-trunk-line package he wants to lock into the new gasoline tax bill.

And since the Republican takeover of the state Senate in 1984, he has chaired the committee, with expanded authority over transportation, that will move the bill.



Shaded areas show corridors that western Oakland officials want designated as state trunk lines: 1) Haggerty corridor from I-96 to M-59, 2) Milford Road corridor from I-96 to M-59 and 3) a connection between M-59 and I-75.

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