

# Contractors: State always plays 'catch-up'

By Warren M. Hoyt  
special writer

In presenting a report indicating inadequate funding for the rehabilitation of main roads and repair and replacement of bridges, the Michigan Road Builders Association recently declared the only real possibility of generating the funding needed was to remove the cap on the per-gallon motor fuel tax.

Lawrence Martin, executive director of the road builder group, said the transportation funding package, currently in the Senate Finance

Committee, includes many needed reforms.

But without a statewide gas tax increase, Martin said, revenues would continue to fall as much as \$275 million short each year. The recommended targets are:

- \$565 million in revenue.
- Rehabilitation of more than 25,000 miles of main roads.
- Repair and replacement of more than 3,200 deficient bridges.

MARTIN SAID that with increases in several user fees proposed in the legislation, and with a proposed diversion of some \$96 million of

auto-related sales taxes from the general fund to the transportation fund, "at most another \$150 million could be generated for transportation purposes."

He said Michigan highways, roads and bridges are "always playing catchup" because revenues always fall short when transportation needs are being addressed by the governor and the Legislature.

Martin said the only two real places to look to bridge the shortfall are the federal government and the state fuel tax.

A REPORT prepared by The

Road Information Program (TRIP) of Washington, released by the Road Builders, concluded Michigan needs to spend \$565 million a year for the next 10 years on the state's main roads and bridges.

State and local agencies, the report concluded, spent an estimated \$291.3 million last year on all road and bridge improvements.

A survey of six Great Lakes states showed that travel per mile on Michigan's state highways is nearly 55 percent higher than the average on Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin roads.

At the same time, however, Michi-

gan spent \$4,176 per mile for state highway improvements, nearly \$2,000 less than the six-state average, according to the transportation research report.

THE TRIP report further noted:

- Michigan spends less per capita improving state roads — \$31.05 compared to the regional average of \$42.05.

- The average vehicle fuel usage has declined nearly 10 percent in the past five years.

- Other Great Lakes states use fees and taxes not imposed in Michi-

gan — such as local option gas and sales taxes in Illinois and Ohio, an excise tax in Indiana and Minnesota, and a weight-distance tax in Ohio.

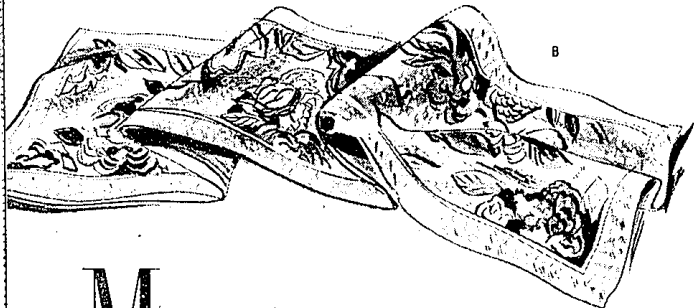
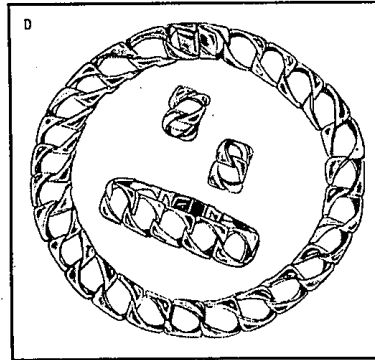
TRIP is a non-profit organization researching, evaluating and distributing economic and technical data on transportation issues.

It is sponsored by energy and insurance companies, motor vehicle manufacturers, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers, businesses involved in highway engineering, construction and financing, labor unions and organizations concerned with transportation networks.

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