

Construction down in '88 road budget

Only \$7.3 million worth of new Oakland County road improvements will be possible next year — less than half the \$16.7 million of 1987.

Maintenance service levels will be the same as for fiscal 1987 with two exceptions: state highway boulevard medians will receive an additional mowing, and patching of gravel roads and shoulders will be increased slightly.

Traffic-safety service levels will be up slightly, including installation of 40 new traffic signals, compared to 28 in fiscal 1987.

That's the story within the 1988 budget adopted by the three-member Oakland County Road Commission.

THE BOARD adopted a \$55.3 million budget for fiscal 1988, which begins Oct. 1. Thus, the total available will be 6.7 percent less than the \$59.2 million that was budgeted for fiscal 1987.

"Federal and local contributions for road improvements will be down. Maintenance and traffic-safety will require more of our basic revenue from the state-collected vehicle fuel and licensing fees," said Fred D. Houghton, chairman of the commission.

"Also, the 1987 budget was augmented by \$3.9 million worth of borrowed funds through sale of bonds, which will not be repeated in fiscal 1988.

TWO ROAD improvement projects originally proposed for the Oakland County Road Commission's fiscal 1988 program had to be dropped, and one has been added.

The added project is preliminary engineering only for future reconstruction of a boulevard on Big Beaver between Rochester and Dequindre roads. Total cost will be \$40,000 with \$30,000 coming from federal aid and \$10,000 each by the city of Troy and the road commission.

"We learned that funding necessary would not be available for the two," said Houghton. Both are in White Lake Township. They were:

- Teggedine paving from M-59 to White Lake Road, a \$600,000

project for which \$450,000 of federal aid was planned but won't be available; and

- Crosby Lake Road regrading for 0.3 mile at White Lake Road, a \$240,000 project that the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA) wanted and has since asked to defer.

LARGEST PROJECT in the adopted program for 1988 is still the resurfacing of Long Lake Road from west of Middlebelt to North Franklin in Bloomfield and West Bloomfield Townships.

This 2.4-mile project will include adding paved shoulders and other safety improvements. The \$2 million cost will be shared \$1.5 million by

federal aid and \$250,000 by the townships and \$250,000 by the road commission.

Three bridge replacements are programmed, each made possible by 90 percent federal-state critical bridge funding.

One is in Troy, on John R north of Long Lake Road. Total is \$400,000 with \$360,000 federal/state aid, \$20,000 city money and \$20,000 from the road commission. Others are in Independence Township.

In Farmington Hills, the program also includes adding lanes to the intersection of Middlebelt and Eleven Mile. The \$380,000 cost will be paid \$342,000 by federal aid, \$19,000 city and \$19,000 road commission.

"CURRENT-YEAR revenue will be up only 1 percent at \$50.8 million," said Houghton. He said that consists of:

- Basic revenue from the state-collected vehicle fuel and licensing fees: up 6.7 percent at \$31.6 million;
- Reimbursements for maintenance of state highways: up 3.6 percent, at \$5.1 million;
- Federal aid for road improvements: down 12.3 percent at \$6.3 million;
- County and local contributions: down 11.2 percent at \$6 million;
- The road commission's own fees and other revenue: down 2.9 percent at \$1.6 million.

Zilwaukee Bridge safety tests to begin

State Transportation Director James P. Pitz announced the start of a special safety testing program for the long-delayed Zilwaukee Bridge.



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Speaking before the Oakland chapter of the Michigan Society of Professional Engineers (MSPE) last week, Pitz said, "I believe this testing program and the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) review will provide solid and convincing evidence of the bridge's safety — to end the controversy."

bridge design to be exotic and controversial, yet segmental bridges have been used in Europe since the 1950s. Currently, more than 70 segmental bridges are either completed or under construction in the U.S. and Canada.

Pitz addressed the gathering of engineers in the Troy Holiday Inn.

PITZ SAID the new testing program, one of the most comprehensive for a segmental bridge, will look at the overall bridge strength rather than its parts.

BEGUN in October 1979, the 1 1/4 mile-long Zilwaukee Bridge is a replacement for an existing four-lane drawbridge carrying 1-75 over the Saginaw River.

Measurements will be made of the deflections (bending) in five spans and the stress on the concrete that occurs when a fully loaded 260-ton truck and trailer is driven over the bridge.

The bridge, unlike traditional steel span bridges, is constructed of 1,592 concrete segments held together with more than 4,000 miles of post-tensioned steel cables.

The tests will be certified by Construction Technology Laboratories Inc. of Chicago, and the results of the testing will be given to a panel of bridge experts hired by the GAO.

It is built to carry more than double the heaviest load expected during the worst traffic jams. (A bumper-to-bumper traffic jam in all four lanes with 40 percent of the vehicles being 40-ton trucks is less than half the bridge's design load.)

Many people consider the segment

lated in mid-October, the controversy over the safety of the "Z" Bridge will be over. "I hope this will be enough proof that the bridge is strong," he said.

THE 1982 construction accident — which caused a 300-foot deck section to rise on one end and sag at the other end and almost caused the bridge to fall — was the result of overloading, he said.

"Human error, not design error, was to blame," said Pitz. "The human error was corrected in 1983, and the damaged part is now the strongest section."

"Following the accident, we required both the contractor and our own engineers to hire separate outside engineering consultants to provide daily input to avoid future problems."

Questioned about safety concerns raised by a consulting engineer hired by The Detroit News, Pitz replied, "We were already on top of the prob-

lem when the story broke.

"The spalls (circular cracks) in question were caused by water entering uncompleted portions of the bridge and freezing. The cracks and repair are not very pretty to look at, but they do not affect the structural safety of the bridge."

A STRUCTURAL engineer with a bachelor of science degree from the University of Marquette, Pitz was relaxed before his technical audience and candidly talked about the controversy surrounding the \$117.5 million project.

Pitz acknowledged that he has worked hard to defuse concerns about the safety of the Zilwaukee Bridge since assuming the directorship of MDOT in 1983.

Pitz emphasized the importance of communication in our work as engineers. We are working to develop better credibility for our engineering abilities. It's a tough task because it is difficult to talk

about a technical subject to non-technical people," he said.

AFTER THE meeting, Pitz discussed the health and safety of the rest of the state's highway bridges.

"Our other bridges are getting attention, but the needs are mind-boggling. Of the approximately 6,300 bridges on the local road system, 2,573 are considered structurally deficient, and 608 are functionally obsolete."

Pitz explained that while all the structurally deficient bridges are not in poor condition, they are rated at loadings below today's legal loads. The functionally obsolete bridges are deficient by reasons of deck shape and/or substandard horizontal and vertical alignments.

Pitz said that bridge replacement and repair costs currently are funded by the \$27-million Critical Bridge Program. The federal government provides \$19.5 million to the fund, the state provides \$5 million, and local county and agencies 10 percent as their share of costs for their projects.

Since 1976, 791 bridges have been funded under the program. Each year approximately 150 new applications are received and only 60 to 80 bridges can be done under current funding levels.

"With our annual bridges inspection we have a good handle on bridge conditions throughout the state, but we are not keeping up with the repairs required," said Pitz.

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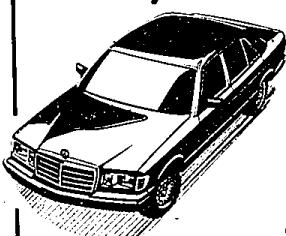


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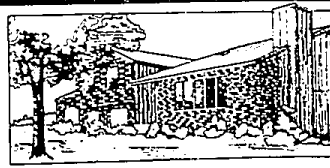
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