

Road fund bills double driver's license

AP — The Legislature has given final approval to bills that raise \$109 million for the state's roads and public transit. The acts will double the cost of a driver's license and increase license plate fees by \$5.

The fee increases now head to Gov. James Blanchard, who praised the lawmakers' efforts to increase the \$1 billion the state spends on transportation by nearly 10 percent without raising the state's gasoline tax.

"I congratulate the House and Senate for their cooperation and bipartisan approval of a transportation package that will enable us to continue improving and rebuilding our roads to accommodate Michigan's strong economic growth," Blanchard said.

The package includes a provision sought by Oakland County — a special countywide license plate fee of up to \$25 per vehicle. It would have to be approved by voters.

THE BILLS narrowly gained final approval Thursday in the House and were supported by a wide margin in the Senate, ending more than 21 months of negotiations on the package.

The most disputed bill, a measure to raise \$18.8 million by increasing the cost of renewing a four-year driver's license fee from \$6 to \$12, gained a bare majority in passing the House.

"It was a cliffhanger," said Rep. Francis "Bus" Spaniolis, D-Corunna and a member of the House-Senate

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panel that worked out the final compromise Tuesday.

Here is how Observer & Eccentric area lawmakers voted:

The House vote:

Yes (56) — Democrats Maxine Berman of Southfield and James Kosteleva of Canton; Republicans W.V. Broderick of Farmington, Mat Dunaskis of Lake Orion, Gerald Law of Plymouth, Judith Miller of Birmingham, Gordon Sparks of Troy.

No (45) — Democrats Justine Barus of Westland, John Bennett of Redford and William Keith of Garden City.

Absent or not voting (9) — Republicans Lyn Banks of Livonia and David Honigman of West Bloomfield.

The Senate passed the bill 26-4. All area senators voted yes.

A SEPARATE measure to raise \$84.9 million by increasing vehicle registrations by \$5 passed the House with just one vote to spare, 57-45. It passed the Senate Wednesday by a

26-8 vote.

It hikes commercial registration on trucks and other vehicles by 15 percent. House Transportation

SEMTA aided, too

Albert Martin, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, praised the Legislature's passage of the transportation funding bill as having a positive effect on public transportation.

If federal funding levels remain stable, Martin said, the state package will allow SEMTA to maintain existing levels of bus service for the immediate future.

The package will generate an additional \$109 million and affects not only roads but public transit, air-

Chairman Curtis Hertel said he didn't expect a strong negative reaction from the public when it sees the money being used to repair and expand the state's road network.

"Wherever you go in the state you can see we're having problems with our highway and public transit systems," said Hertel, D-Detroit.

THE HIGHER fees will take effect April 5, but they will begin showing up in driver's license and registration renewals mailed out Feb. 16.

The bills also would allocate \$50 million for an economic develop-

ports, bridges, railroads and waterways.

The share allotted to public transportation in Michigan is \$8.4 million, of which SEMTA and the Detroit Department of Transportation will receive approximately \$4 million. The package provides an additional \$1 million annually to SEMTA for its municipal credit program, under which SEMTA provides money to communities in the service region. Municipal credits typically provide reduced or free public transportation for the elderly and handicapped.

ment fund and allow each of Michigan's 83 counties to adopt its own vehicle registration fees.

The \$109 million raised by the seven transportation bills is roughly equal to a 2.5-cents a gallon increase in the fuel tax.

"It really feels good after many months of working on it," said Jim Pitz, director of the state Transportation Department. He believes most residents will support the fee increase when they see how small it is

and realize that many of the fees haven't been increased in 20 years.

Legislators were reluctant to increase the fees charged at various Secretary of State branches for fear of the political fallout. They finally gave in after providing that signs be posted in each branch explaining the new fees.

The signs will indicate how much the new fees are, how much it costs the state to process each transaction and how the money will be used.

OCC campus to register

Registration for non-credit courses at the Highland Lakes Campus of Oakland Community College runs from Jan. 4 to 25. The campus is at 7350 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake.

Courses range from arts and crafts, finance, recreation, self-im-

provement, business workshops and special programs for singles. Special interest classes cover house buying, child care, exercise and aging, and getting a builder's license.

A copy of the brochure can be obtained by calling OCC at 360-3041.

State fees will rise

Fee increases on their way to Gov. Blanchard will not only double driver's license fees but increase these other fees:

- Title application fees increase from \$2 to \$10.

- Registration transfer fees increase from \$2 to \$5.

- Moped transfer fee jumps from \$2 to \$10. Moped registration fee remains at \$15.

- Chauffeur licenses would increase from \$4 for a one-year license to \$5, jump from \$8 to \$10 for a two-year license, and \$16 to \$20 for a four-year license.


- Motorists would no longer pay \$1.50 to get a duplicate license or pay \$0 cents to correct their license, but instead would be required to buy a new license for \$12.

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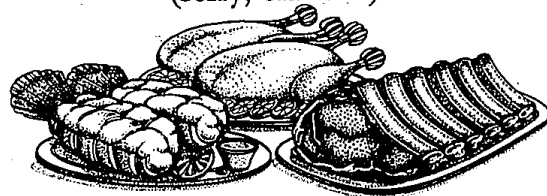


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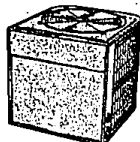
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