

# Vote for road fee takes another step

By Janice Brunson  
staff writer

Oakland County is a step closer to a November vote to approve a \$25 vehicle registration fee that would raise \$180 million over 10 years for road maintenance.

The transportation committee of the county Board of Commissioners unanimously agreed Wednesday on the need for the election but was divided on whether August or November was the best date.

The resolution that will be considered by the full board calls for the issue to be on the Nov. 8 general election ballot.

If voters approve the issue, the fee would generate about \$18 million a year, which would be split between the county road commission and local cities and towns. Ninety percent of the income is earmarked for road maintenance. The remaining 10 percent can be spent on transportation service.

**COMMITTEE CHAIR** John McDonald (R-Farmington), majority vice chair James Lanni (R-Royal Oak) and member Thomas Law (R-West Bloomfield) voted against placing the measure on the August ballot, opting for the November general election.

"Senior citizens tend to vote in heavy numbers during primary elections. The issue has a better chance of passing then," said Lanni, in moving to place the issue before voters in August.

Law said West Bloomfield Township voters will consider a vote of passing then, said Lanni, in moving to place the issue before voters in August.

"Our primary purpose is getting this measure on the August ballot," said McDonald.

Minority vice chair Dennis Aaron (D-Oak Park) and members John Calandro (R-Nov) and Lawrence Pernick (D-Southfield) voted against placing the measure on the August ballot, opting for the November general election.

"Without groundwork, explaining to the voters what the money is for and how it will be spent, we face disaster," said Aaron, adding an August election did not permit time enough to inform voters.

Pernick objected to August because so few people participate in primary elections. "When we ask for this kind of revenue, more people should participate in the decision process. It's not a question of date

of letting people know where the money is going."

**MEMBERS UNANIMOUSLY** agreed on placing the issue before voters.

"The whole philosophy of this is giving local people the power to make decisions on how the money will be spent," McDonald said.

If passed, vehicles owned by residents of Oakland County will be charged \$25 each in registration fees, beginning June 1, 1989. The fee would be removed May 31, 1999.

"Ten years is a good period of time. People like to know when things will end," Law said. The fee is expected to generate \$180 million over 10 years, according to Grubba who said he based the figure on current the Oakland County population, which is expected to increase by 250,000 within the next decade.

"The amount leaves us far short of our goal of \$750 million over the next 10 years, but it's a beginning."

Grubba said he was worried that large corporations such as IBM, General Motors and Ford use county roads while registering vehicles in

other counties and states. "It's unfair," he said.

John King, a Bloomfield Township resident who describes himself as a self-appointed ombudsman, told committee members he thought the registration fee proposal discriminated against townships.

"It gives special treatment to cities and villages but where does it leave townships?" King asked.

West Bloomfield, Bloomfield and Oakland townships, like all townships, have no jurisdiction over roads under state law.

## Southfield to gain if voters OK fee

If Oakland County voters approve a \$25 vehicle registration, here is a look at how much money some cities would receive the first year:

Southfield, nearly \$1 million; Troy and Farmington Hills, nearly \$800,000; Birmingham, nearly \$250,000; Beverly Hills and Farmington, over \$100,000; Rochester, as mass transportation or transportation for the handicapped.

Ninety percent of the income must be used on road improvements. Local officials can choose to use the remaining 10 percent for such services as mass transportation or transportation for the handicapped.

## Homeless needs shown in drama

An ABC drama dealing with poverty, hunger and the homeless will be aired 9-11 p.m., Monday, Mar. 21, on Channel 7, WXYZ-TV.

The program, titled "God Bless the Children," examines legislation and social service systems throughout the country.

Michigan legislators and advocates of the poor will view a special screening of the program on March 17, followed by a discussion of the film led by Gene Gony.

Gony, president of the Gleasons Community Food Bank in Detroit, also serves on the Detroit Coalition

on Temporary Shelter. He saw the film last month at a national conference on food in Washington D.C.

"It is one of the most powerful and gripping presentations on hunger and homelessness I have ever seen. Everyone was extremely moved. There wasn't a dry eye," he said.

People living in Michigan must have a permanent address to qualify for government assistance, according to Gony who said one of nine families in the country is now living below established poverty standards.

For more information about the special screening, call 923-3535.

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