

# County road campaign becoming very local

By Tim Richard  
Staff writer

The campaign for a \$25 vehicle registration fee in Oakland County could turn into dozens of local campaigns for roads.

That's because the county Road Commission is canvassing 58 cities, townships and villages for their priorities and trying to address them individually.

"We're not publicly campaigning yet," said OCRC chairman Fred Houghten of Rochester Hills. As a public agency, he said, it can't spend tax money to campaign for the \$18.6

million issue on the Aug. 2 ballot.

PRIVATE GROUPS are expected to raise campaign money, particularly in areas with traffic jams due to economic growth.

"Nobody had to ask CORE to get in," said Lawrence Littman, another member of the three-man road panel. CORE is Committee on Road Enhancement, an outgrowth of the Troy Chamber of Commerce.

"There's a 'son of CORE' out in Rochester," added Houghten.

Two countywide tax campaigns have been run in recent years. In 1984 the Parks and Recreation Com-

mission raised private money to re-new its property tax millage. In 1986 the Oakland Intermediate School District ran an almost invisible campaign, contacting only people with school connections, to win approval of a tax increase for special education.

THE COUNTY Board of Commissioners on March 24 voted 20-4 to place the proposal on the primary election ballot.

"There was good bipartisan support," said Littman of Troy. "I didn't understand why they had an argument over the election date."

Voting to place the issue on the ballot were 17 Republicans and three Democrats. Four dissenting Democrats argued that a Nov. 8 vote would allow more campaign time and also asked in vain that the board of commissioners endorse the proposal now.

Houghten wasn't disappointed, however, that the 27 elected commissioners didn't endorse the plan immediately. "It's premature to expect an endorsement at this point, but I hope we'll get one later. They want to see our overall plan," he said.

"WE'RE MEETING with every

community in the county," said Brent Bair, OCRC's director of planning and development.

"We've had 32 or 33 meetings thus far. We'll be done by the end of April. We ask them what kinds of improvements do they want. Based on that input, we'll put together a plan."

This year's survey of the communities is a followup to the 1985-86 survey in which communities placed economic road needs at a total of \$750 million over 10 years. That needs list prompted the road commission to ask for several local-option taxes. The Michigan Legislature

allowed only one — the \$25-per-vehicle registration fee on the ballot.

BAIR SAID communities are coming up with pretty much the same needs list as two years ago.

"They're really not making a wish list. They're listing lots of the same priorities. It's rather consistent. That shows they have legitimate needs, not a wish list."

"In general the response has been very good. They are supportive," Bair said.

The road commission will put all the lists together in a program by June 1. That will leave campaigners two months to reach voters.

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