

Haggerty traffic is focus of hearing

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

After many delays, residents along the Haggerty corridor will have their say at a public hearing on a study of alternatives to relieve congestion along the heavily traveled road.

A preliminary environmental impact study is expected to be shared with municipal leaders in communities affected by the proposed new road connecting I-96 to Pontiac Trail near Haggerty.

Officials in Farmington Hills, Farmington, West Bloomfield, Novi and Commerce Township are expected to review the document in March, before the April public hearing.

Last week, Michigan Department of Transportation officials were waiting for comments to the preliminary environmental study from officials of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

"We will save time dealing with them up front," said Andy Zeigler, MDOT spokesman.

The study covers how two major alternative designs for the Haggerty corridor will affect residents, businesses and the environment. "It will itemize the pros and cons," Zeigler said.

THE FINAL environmental impact study is expected by late summer, before which municipal leaders will be expected to include their favored road design for the Haggerty connector. MDOT officials are hoping to have a construction contract before the year's end.

The Farmington Hills City Council more than a year ago indicated it preferred the option of angling the new roadway directly northbound off I-96 and running it about a half-mile west of Haggerty to Pontiac Trail. Haggerty Road would remain as it is.

"We got letters from residents saying that, basically, they don't want an expanded roadway right on Haggerty," Farmington Hills assistant city manager David Call said.

A second option would angle the new road eastbound from I-96 connecting with Haggerty at 13 Mile, where it would become a divided boulevard to Pontiac Trail. Under this option, Haggerty would be a service drive, Call said.

Novi officials have taken a similar position as Farmington Hills on the west-of-Haggerty, or so-called off-road, alignment alternative. West



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Snow angel

Five-year-old Ben Achtenberg of Farmington makes a snow angel on the hill behind Farmington Public Schools' Lewis Schulman Administrative Center at Shiawassee and Farmington roads in Farmington following Tuesday's early morning snowfall.

Blomfield and Commerce township officials have not yet taken a position.

"Our plans have been to wait for the impact statement," a Commerce Township official said.

BUT CONCERN accompanies both options. The less-expensive west-of-Haggerty option, estimated at \$72 million, would traverse significant wetlands. The second option involves far fewer wetlands but is more expensive at an estimated \$109 million. An other option, similar to the one on Haggerty, could avoid the Black Spruce Bog in Novi at an estimated cost of \$114 million.

"They (MDOT officials) have not

approached us yet relative to any costs," Call said. Farmington Hills doesn't have to buy right-of-way for the project if the west-of-Haggerty option is chosen, he said.

The Haggerty connector makes a stronger case for the city's need for financing for the planned widening of the 12 Mile corridor, Call said. If 12 Mile is not widened, MDOT officials are concerned that traffic will back up into the connector road from the heavily congested mile road.

"They (MDOT officials) want to make sure the city has plans to widen it," Call added.

Also of concern to some municipal leaders is MDOT's plans to maintain

the Haggerty connector and the proposed M-9 trunkline — from I-96 past Pontiac Trail to M-59 as separate projects.

Though the planned roadway from I-96 to Pontiac Trail is often called M-9, MDOT officials maintain it is not one in the same.

A study for the entire M-9 project, from I-96 to M-59, will begin once federal approval is received on the Haggerty connector project, MDOT official Hank Lotoczinski said.

Officials from the Commerce Township-Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and the Oakland County Road Commission said they would oppose any project that does not take the road from I-96 to M-59.

Year 2000 plan seeks to retain initial support

Group tries to prepare for future

Planning for the year 2000 is more than just making a wish list of things to have in the future.

For the people on a task force for "The Year 2000 Plan," it means learning how to think creatively, how to work skillfully in a group setting and how to release long-held mindsets, opening the way for an outpouring of new ideas.

According to Ed Barlow, futurist and motivation consultant on this Farmington Hills project, "The biggest challenge is to maintain the high level of energy and excitement that people felt initially when they made their commitment to serve on a task force."

"You could feel the energy level at the kick-off meeting recently when over 150 people, volunteers for the task force, met with Barlow. He provided them with messages of guidance, inspiration and encouragement in a daylong session designed to get the gears in motion," said Esther Frank, city publicist.

TASK FORCES met for the first time that day as a group and, as part of their assignment, wrote their idea of a headline for newspapers in the year 2000. The public safety committee wrote, "Farmington Hills — Safest City in U.S.A." The beautification group wrote, "Orchard Lake Corridor Voted Most Scenic in Michigan." Other messages were as visionary and representative of the



Steering committee chairman Jack McDonald, a former county commissioner, addresses Year 2000 task force members during their January kickoff.

team work involved in this first group effort.

Since that meeting, the task force met on their own to elect a leader. Those chairmen will meet once a month as a steering committee, headed by Jack McDonald, to exchange ideas, problems and report on their accomplishments.

On Feb. 25, Barlow will train newly elected task force chairmen and vice-chairmen in the continuing process of future. He will offer positive leadership skills in communication, organization and direction in conducting a good meeting.

Each task force will meet at least once a month with additional meetings as needed throughout this year-long project. All meetings will be open to the public.

The five task force committees are: Public facilities and services; financial and economic vitality; beautification and environmental preservation; human services; and leisure and cultural activities.

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