

# Get ready for the big traffic jam - it's coming

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

You'll be driving longer and enjoying it less by the year 2010.

With 6 percent more people, southeast Michigan will have:

- 19 percent more households and 18 percent more jobs.
- 40 percent more land built on.
- 40 percent more vehicle traffic - but minimal road expansion.

• 50 percent longer vehicle trips because of more start-stop traffic.

The culprit will be "urban sprawl," members of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments were told recently - more vacant land going into development, at a pace faster than population growth, with developed land, streets, water and sewer lines left unused.

THAT GRIM outline of what "business as usual" will do to the

seven-county region around Detroit was painted by Edward Hustoles, SEMCOG's chief planner, and Marilyn Gosling, co-chair of SEMCOG's Regional Development Initiative Committee. SEMCOG's general assembly met in Livonia.

"Business as usual" means the kind of bulldozer growth the region has seen since World War I in which a handful of developers make major decisions and fragmented local governments acquiesce.

It is only one of several scenarios SEMCOG will study in the next year. The study was prompted by the city of Auburn Hills' decision to allow development of a megamall drawing traffic from 50 miles to rural countryside and a wetland, with older neighboring communities voiceless.

"This situation to date has resulted from a fragmented reaction to a

market-driven development pattern," said Gosling, an Oakland County commissioner from Bloomfield Hills.

"Decisions are made by literally thousands of individuals, firms and governments. Each decision in itself may be logical, but those decisions generally are without consideration of the immediate long-term impacts on surrounding communities, counties and the region."

BESIDES GOBBLING up farmland, Gosling told SEMCOG delegates, urban sprawl will mean shifting of population with little gain, longer commutes, a widening gap between the location of low-wage, entry level jobs and people who need such jobs - and more taxes to replace unused infrastructure.

Hustoles filled in some of the details.

• The region will have to spend \$2 billion to end so-called "combined sewers" in which sewage and stormwater are mixed and overflow into rivers, and no one has any idea where the money will come from.

• A bigger proportion of public budgets will go into environmental cleanup, leaving less for other services.

"We can't build our way out," said Hustoles.

"The goal will be to project neither a 'doomsday' nor a 'rosy' picture of the future. Rather, we will seek a realistic 'trend' forecast," he added.

SEMCOG planners will hold a series of six workshops to particular

issues such as transportation and environment.

A final report to the general assembly is due in October of 1991.

"URBAN SPRAWL" has been denounced politically for years, particularly by Gov. William G. Milliken in the 1970s.

SEMCOG's elected leaders put the subject on the back burner in 1979, during the recession and scramble to lure "jobs, jobs, jobs." The Auburn Mills project sparked resistance, however, from even such postwar growth suburbs as Southfield and Rochester Hills.

SEMCOG delegates greeted Hustoles' and Gosling's remarks with polite applause and gasps but no public comment.

## Megamall developer hails high court ruling

The developer of the Auburn Mills megamall hailed the Michigan Supreme Court's recent decision allowing the case against the 2.5 million square foot development.

John Vigilanti, vice president and senior development director for Western Development Corporation of Washington, D.C., was pleased the high court an application for leave to appeal and a motion for preliminary injunction sought by the neighboring city of Lake Angelus to halt work on Auburn Mills.

"This is an important victory for Western Development Corp. and Auburn Mills. We are pleased with it."

day's Michigan Supreme Court decision, which upholds earlier rulings on the same issues by the Michigan Court of Appeals and the Oakland County Circuit Court.

"This allows the Auburn Mills project to continue on schedule. We look forward to the next step in our plan to introduce value-oriented retail to southeastern Michigan, as well as bringing thousands of new jobs and millions of dollars in increased tax revenues to the region."

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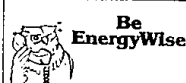
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