

# County delays action on new traffic system

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

A proposal to begin dealing with Oakland's traffic problems has hit with gridlock.

At their regular meeting Thursday, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners postponed action on two major items after commissioners complained they were too much in too short a time frame.

The board postponed action on providing \$2 million as the county's share of a \$70 million project to build a system of "smart" traffic controls on an experimental basis in Troy — and most of southeast Oakland if pilot is successful.

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— Thomas A. Law  
commissioner

The board also postponed approving the content of the so-called intergovernmental agreements, the bedrock of the county's proposed \$500 million solid waste program.

Actually, the board postponed the

measures because individual commissioners said they wanted more information about the controversial proposals.

"I simply want more data before I commit," explained commissioner

Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham. "We've got too many things going to make any decision without all the vital information."

**COMMISSIONER ROY REWOLD**, board chairman, agreed that expecting his colleagues to act might be expecting too much.

"I'm going to call a special meeting early next month," said Rewold, a Republican from Oakland Township. "We've got a lot of work to do and everybody needs to be brought up to date."

Perhaps the more complicated issue is the county's committing \$2 million to build what the Oakland Road Commission characterizes as "smart roads."

Earlier in November, the director of the road commission, John Grubba, asked commissioners to contribute the money to computerize traffic signals as a means of managing traffic to avoid snarls and congestion.

Similar "smart" traffic systems are being used experimentally in

Berlin (Germany) as well as other U.S. cities.

Emphasizing that installing the system was a means of "directing our way out of gridlock" rather than simply building more roads, Grubba said investing \$2 million would enable Oakland to qualify for \$70 million in federal funds.

**"BUT ONLY** if the county acts quickly," Grubba cautioned. "We've got to present our plan" to federal authorities before other communities submit theirs.

Commissioner John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy, agreed. "If we're going to qualify for federal funds, we've got to have our ducks in a row, he said in the Republican caucus ahead of Thursday's meeting.

"The feds don't give money for ideas," said the retired Army colonel. "They provide money for concrete plans" with a high probability of success.

Commissioner Jack Olsen, R-Huntington Woods, said he generally

opposes the county's allocating \$2 million. "I can be persuaded," Olsen said. "But if this project is so important, why doesn't the road commission put up the money?"

Commissioner Thomas A. Law, R-West Bloomfield, said the road commission's request for \$2 million raises a basic issue that has been haunting the county for decades.

"For years the road commission keeps asking for money," Law said. "And commissioners keep looking for a way to provide it. But we're also looking for a way to get more control. We want more accountability (on the part of the road commission)."

But he's willing to look for the \$2 million, Law said. "Any time you get John Grubba and Dan Murphy working on the same side of a project, you know there must be something good in it for the county."

Law was referring to the fact that County Executive Daniel T. Murphy joined with the road commission to propose the project for smart roads.

## Patient advocacy bill wins Senate support

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Local senators gave strong support Thursday to a "patient advocate" bill cleared the Senate 29-2.

The measure, kicked around the Legislature for 16 years, goes back to the House for concurrence in one amendment.

If signed by Gov. James Blanchard, it would become law about April 1.

"We're pleased and relieved," said David Wiener, an aide to Rep. David Hollister, D-East Lansing, who met with the Observer & Eccentric editorial committee last week.

Until this year, House Bill 4016 had been dubbed a "right to die" measure. But supporters dislike that term.

**THE PATIENT** advocate bill says a person 18 or older may designate another adult to make decisions concerning care, custody and medical treatment if the person becomes incapacitated.

Supporting it were Sens. Jack Paxson, D-Farmington Hills, Richard Fessler, R-Commerce, Robert Geake, R-Northville, Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, and George Hart, D-Deerborn.

Sens. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, and William Faust, D-Westland, had excused absences.

Right to Life, a group best known for opposing abortion, raised many

objections over the years, particularly on the issues of treating pregnant women and withholding nutrition and water.

"We can say very clearly we are not opposed to it," said RTL president Barbara Lister.

Wiener said language in the bill is similar to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision this year in the Nancy Cruzan case. The high court held there had to be "clear and convincing evidence" in writing that Cruzan would have wanted to end medical treatment if she knew she might go into a vegetative coma. That case emanated from Missouri.

**THE BILL** was reported out of the Senate Human Resources Committee in mid-September. But committee chair Fred Dillingham, R-Farmington Hills, held up the final floor vote to await good faith action by the House Judiciary Committee on the bill he wanted — outlawing assisted suicides.

"We held hearings on assisted suicides," said Wiener, "but we had opened up a can of worms. We said to Dillingham, 'We can't solve this in a month.' He said, 'Try.'"

Wiener said House staffers will work on the assisted suicide measure next session.

Dillingham fears Michigan will become the "suicide capital" of the nation because of the notoriety of a Royal Oak pathologist who linked a woman to a machine that allowed

her to end her own life.

**MEANWHILE**, A related measure — called "living will" — is dead for this session.

House Bill 4174 was rejected earlier this year and sent back to the Judiciary Committee.

It would have allowed persons to designate the extent of medical treatment they wish to receive if they become incapacitated. Sponsor Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, calls it the "medical self-determination" bill.

"We need living wills," Dr. John Finn of Hospice of Southeastern Michigan told the Observer & Eccentric editorial committee last week.

"It's very hard to die in peace in this state. There is an intense legal climate. Physicians have exaggerated concerns for liability. Physicians practice out of a sense of liability rather than what's ethical."

"We don't press for durable power of attorney," he said.

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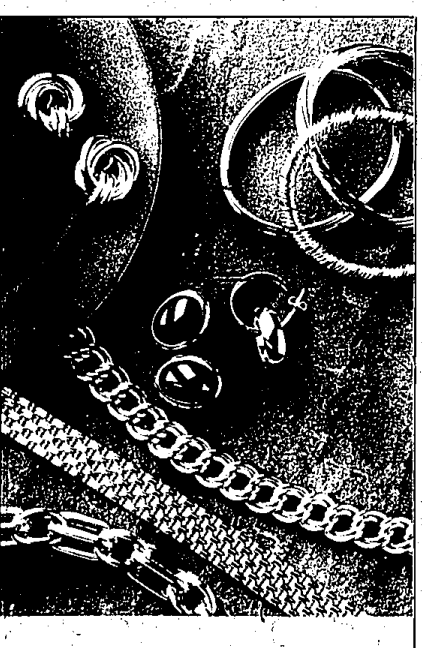
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