

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336 Tom Baer editor/477-5450

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Traffic woes Troubled corner needs help

IF YOU DON'T believe that the intersection of M-102 and Grand River is a traffic bottleneck, then just try driving through it during any rush hour, any daytime hour, really.

And if you think that this screwed-up confluence of five major highways isn't hurting commerce, talk to business people in that end of town. They'll offer to drive you around (in clogged traffic, of course) and show you the "for sale" and "for lease" signs sprouting in the area.

The intersection continues to be a real problem for both local and through traffic in western Farmington Hills.

For many years now, getting from here (developed Farmington Hills) to there (burgeoning Novi and points west) could be a slow proposition if the route involved Grand River or 10 Mile.

Those thoroughfares meet in an area of warehouses, motels, restaurants and auto dealerships and similar non-residential concerns. M-102 (the old Farmington cut-off) snakes through. There are also Halsted Road for north/south traffic and busy I-275 just to the west.

A TWO-LANE bridge that carries Grand River traffic over M-102 is a particular problem. An additional span, running parallel to the original, has been proposed.

Traffic woes in that area have been discussed (and discussed) by politicians and business people at several breakfasts and luncheons held, appropriately enough, at the Holiday Inn on 10 Mile.

Everyone agreed that something had to be done. But important questions (what? when? who will pay?) always seemed to go unanswered.

However, last week there was fresh hope that the long-stalled improvements to the intersection and surrounding area would actually come to be.

State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, and a delegation of local business people met with two key state officials — Pat Nowak, Michigan Department of Transportation director, and Commerce director Arthur Ellis — to discuss ef-

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forts to reduce traffic congestion.

It was pointed out, according to Dolan, that businesses served by this traffic route account for 18 percent of Farmington Hills' commercial tax base, and that businesses in that 1½-square-mile area provide 10,000 jobs.

A PRELIMINARY study of construction needs could cost as much as \$175,000, Dolan said. The Farmington Hills Economic Development Corp., which has obvious interests in the area, will finance up to \$80,000 of the study.

"Pat Nowak said the state would have to seek matching federal money for the project if estimated costs are \$10 million to \$25 million," Dolan added. "However, if studies indicate the necessary work can be done for less than \$10 million, the state might be able to finance it alone."

"He (Nowak) has promised to direct his staff to work closely with Farmington Hills City Manager Bill Costick to seek available funds in the state transportation budget."

Well, while the additional bridge and other improvements are thousands of traffic jams away, it is good to see the right people talking about the problem and solutions. It's really the first good sign we've seen.

Someone from the city of Novi should be included in future discussions. Support in the form of ideas and finances are needed from that city.

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Gun control? Bill seems already in effect

THE BRADY BILL, which would impose a waiting period before allowing the purchase of a handgun, can be supported without diluting anyone's Constitutional right to own a firearm.

Given all the malarkey oozing out of Washington from politicians and National Rifle Association lobbyists, it's easy to see why there is confusion about the bill. As usual, though, the real answer comes from sources closer to home — area law enforcement agencies and gun store owners.

One Oakland County gun store owner said he, and many of his competitors, support the Brady Bill because they know the shopping habits of their customers. Guns are not impulse purchases for most people, even after they have fulfilled requirements with local police departments to get a permit to purchase a handgun.

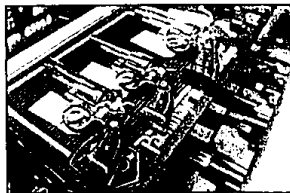
THE STORE OWNER said most people shop around, understand the importance of making an intelligent decision and are willing to listen to reason when deciding on what kind of gun to purchase. It's as though the Brady Bill already is in effect, informally.

It's also important to note the Brady Bill does not erase one's right to purchase a handgun. The

bill just delays the process for seven days, which, according to the gun store owner, is about the average amount of time it takes someone to make a decision anyway.

Law enforcement agencies aren't interested in creating police states, either. Most police officers strongly support an individual's right to own a weapon but rightly question anyone who maintains the purchase of a handgun is an emergency and can't wait a few days.

As written, there's nothing insidious about the Brady Bill. It can and should be supported as a method of responsible firearm regulation.



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los relegated to the trash can.

And then, too, there is the Big Brother aspect of the plan. We just naturally get a little nervous when we see the authorities taking massive numbers of pictures.

That raises the specter of authorities next snapping your photo as you come out of an adult book store, a political meeting, a church or a voting booth. A little far-fetched? Well, maybe.

But we'd feel better if the police would stick to good, solid police work — like stopping speeders and writing tickets on the scene — and forget the photographic gimmickry.

Camera snoops Photos no answer to speed

BIG BROTHER is doing more than just watching you. He's snapping your picture as you speed along the freeway.

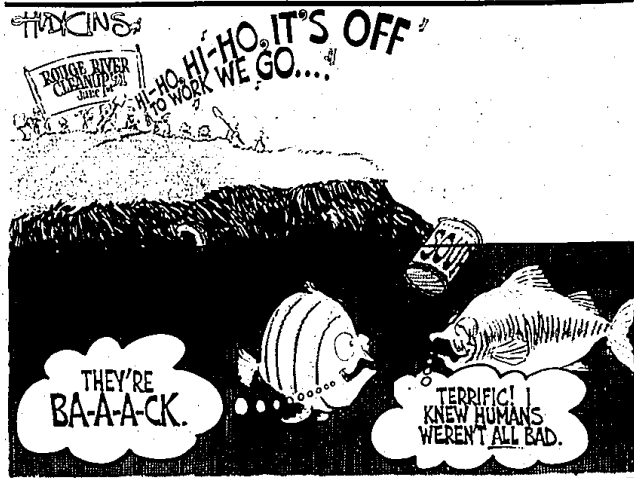
This summer state troopers may test a new radar that takes photos of speeders' license plates. The photos, along with warning letters, will then be mailed to the offenders.

And digital speed signs will be placed along freeways to remind drivers of how fast they're going.

The idea, we suppose, is to send a message to motorists: We are watching you — slow down!

That message is valid enough. People drive too fast on expressways. They barrel along at 75 mph and faster when the speed limit most places in the Detroit area is 55.

BUT WE HAVE to wonder how effective this high tech camera snooping will be. It'll be a novelty at first and a few drivers may even slow down a bit. When speeders learn there's no punch in the warnings, they'll step on it again, the pho-



Help our schools plan for students' progress

EVER WANTED to complain about your child's school? Now's your chance. Ever wondered if the quality of your grandchild's school will improve? Here's the way to get the answer.

Ever attended a parent-teacher conference and wondered just what was going on in your child's school? Here's the way to find out.

Every school building in Michigan is required by law to give the public a written annual report on its educational progress by July 31. Some schools will be offering the report now, some later this summer.

Like a corporation's annual report to shareholders, with statistical tables showing annual results and management's plans for the future, these reports must contain sections on current educational performance as well as a "school improvement plan."

Elsewhere in today's newspaper you will find information about where and when the annual education report will be presented for your child's school. (Note these reports are not for an entire district; they are specific to each individual school in Michigan.)

THE NOTION of a series of annual reports containing statistical indices of educational achievement together with three- to five-year school improvement plans is simple. Setting out achievements and plans for future improvement in public is a way to put the pressure on from the people that count: the parents of children attending the school as well as taxpayers in the district.

It's a fine idea, and I hope it works. But it will work only if two

Setting out achievements and plans for future improvement in public is a way to put the pressure on from the people that count: the parents of children attending the school as well as taxpayers in the district.

things happen:

First, school officials actually must make an effort to get people to the school improvement meetings.

Second, people actually must come, ask questions and get involved.

A few school administrators already are nervous about their reports. They'll try to keep them in the dark unless you call up and demand to know when and where they will be presented. If you can't find out or officials won't tell you, complain or call this newspaper and ask us to find out and run the story.

Other, more responsible school officials are anxious to have maximum public involvement because they know that's the way to get the support they need. Some are scheduling their school improvement meetings after school concerts or after ice cream socials. Others are sending notices home to parents with school newsletters.

Once you find out where and when your school's meeting is, please attend it. Ask questions. Make com-



Phillip Power
Write a letter to the principal or to this newspaper. Whatever — just so long as you register your input.

ONE-BIG-REASON our schools have fallen behind is that we have tolerated it.

Businesses have accepted new employees who cannot write or spell or do simple math. Then the businesses haven't screamed bloody murder to the schools.

Parents have wondered why Johnny can't read. Then the parents haven't raised holy hell with the school board or building principal. In some communities, it's even hard to persuade sensible and able people to run for the school board.

That's terrible. In a democracy, when people don't know, they don't care. And when they don't care, things go to pot.

The logic of public meetings on school achievement and plans for progress is to provide a way for all of us to get involved, to review what's going on and to make our views known.

Only in this way will anything be done about the crisis in our children's schools.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

from our readers

A big thanks for voting yes

To the editor:

An open letter to the voters of Farmington Hills:

On May 7 an overwhelming majority of you said thank you in the most flattering way — you voted to renew our parks millage for eight years.

We believe your support recognized the mechanism of public comment and feedback as a method of developing and implementing a comprehensive parks program for the residents of Farmington Hills.

Additionally, it acknowledged that the task is far from over. Much more can and will be done to address the recreational needs of our community and contribute to the quality of life in Farmington Hills.

The parks and recreation commission, with your input and the guidance of city council, is committed to fulfilling the expectations you endorsed on May 7.

Your thanks to you go much farther than the words and feelings of this letter but will be demonstrated by action and results over the next eight years as we do the following:

- Acquire more land for youth sports and family recreation
- Expand facilities for the senior citizens and culturalists in Farmington Hills.

- Begin a bike route system within Farmington Hills.
- Continue to cooperatively upgrade school sites for youth baseball and soccer.
- Begin a careful development of the Peltz/MDOT property.

Again, thanks for your support, and we hope for your continued interest.

Dennis Fitzgerald,
chairman,
Parks and Recreation Commission

Columnist is off base

To the editor:

It's common misconception, but auto columnist Dan McCosh is dead wrong when he writes in your May 16 issue that fleet sales by auto manufacturers bypass the dealers and deny them any profits on such business.

Under the laws of most states and the practices of many automakers and importers, sales to fleet buyers are processed through franchised dealers.

This assures the states of their sales tax revenues but also prevents manufacturers from undermining the franchise system by making "factory sales" direct.

Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others in the From Our Readers column.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words. Letters must be signed and include the address of the sender.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

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