

State to sell bonds for road work - Nowak

By Tim Richard
staff writer

The Engler administration plans to sell bonds rather than raise fuel taxes to meet the state's share of road construction costs in the next six years.

"Now is a very good time for bonding. Interest rates are at an all-time low," said Patrick M. Nowak, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Nowak told a home-town audience in the Farmington Republican Club Thursday that his administration

had saved a total of \$150 million in cost from a \$1.2 billion budget.

"We're going to plug the leaks before we turn on the faucet," he said. "But it doesn't mean we'll never have an increase in fuel revenue."

GOV. JOHN Engler disappointed many Oakland County and outside officials in his Jan. 21 state of the state address when he said "now is not the time" to raise fuel taxes. Michigan's tax was raised to 15 cents in 1983.

Engler left unanswered how the state will meet its 20 percent match

of \$3.1 billion in new federal revenue over six years from a 5-cent extension of the fuel tax. State revenues have been flat and even declining for several years due to fuel efficiency.

Nowak, a former Oakland County commissioner and deputy county executive, declined to be specific about a bond issue, promising Engler himself would unveil the plan "in the next few weeks."

Nowak promised a total state-local construction program next year of \$480 million. "After that we'll see a 20 percent increase. The governor is determined to match every dollar," Nowak said.

Unlike past generations when Michigan got back 85 cents of every \$1 in fuel taxes it sent to Washington, now the state will get 90 cents and probably more, thanks to bipartisan work by its congressional delegation, he said.

SOME "LEAKS" Nowak said he has plugged:

• One-fifth of all management

positions. Previously, MDOT had one supervisor for every two workers. "A span of control should be much broader," he said, using an industry analogy.

• New management systems for pavement and bridges.

• New computer systems. "When I got to Lansing, I asked my computer some questions, and it gave me obsolete information."

• \$1 million in savings through more efficient salt delivery. "We went around the trucking regulations."

• \$20 million in new revenues by catching truckers who were evading taxes.

• Privatizing grass mowing at \$20 an acre instead of using state workers at \$50 an acre. "It doesn't sound like much, but we have 50,000 acres. That's a savings of \$1 million. I could tell you some real horror stories on maintenance."

IN ANSWER to audience questions, Nowak said:

Deadline extended to nominate senior for volunteerism award

Citizens Insurance Co. of Howell announced it is extending the nomination deadline for its fourth annual "Concerned Citizens Awards Program" to Feb. 29.

The company will honor 10 of Michigan's outstanding senior citizen volunteers.

"Although we have received excellent response to the program thus far, there are still many people who called indicating they couldn't meet the original deadline (Jan. 31) due to the busy holiday season," said Sheila Wright, program director.

"We are therefore extending the deadline so that everyone will have ample time to send in a nomination form for those seniors who should be recognized."

Honorees will be selected by a panel of judges by the end of March. The statewide program is open to the public. Nominees do not have to be customers of Citizens Insurance Co.

Nomination forms are available from participating Citizens Insurance independent agents, United Way agencies, senior citizen centers, or by calling Citizens Insurance Co. at (517) 546-2160, Ext. 2746.

Winners will receive a \$500 cash prize and a \$500 donation to the charity of their choice. All will be honored at the "Senior Summit" in the spring, a special forum on senior issues and opportunities, sponsored by the company.

Nominees must be residents of Michigan who are at least 60 years old. Only volunteers are eligible. Previous candidates may be nominated again if they were not winners.

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