

Traffic czar

Former OU official watches cars now

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

The next time you're backed up two miles behind a million cars at a light on Telegraph Road, think about Frank Cardimen Jr.

A Rochester Hills resident, former Rockwell executive and former Oakland University executive, Cardimen now heads the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County, a quasi-governmental, non-profit outfit dedicated to eliminating traffic jams and traffic deaths in Oakland County.

Cardimen, 53, began at TIA in February after a 13-year rise through the ranks at Oakland University. Beginning as a part-time business administration teacher, Cardimen moved up to full-time teaching, then ascended to become director of economic development, director of continuing professional education and finally acting vice president of development and alumni affairs.

As the last university official to run the Meadow Brook Music Festival before it was turned over to Olympia Arenas, Cardimen still feels strongly that he might have made the concert venue profitable, if given one more year.

Can't break even

Although he reduced the operational deficit by some \$350,000, Cardimen couldn't reach the break-even point. "I would have liked one more year to give it a shot," he said. "I really wanted that break-even (point) so bad, but we just couldn't do it."

Still, alumni relations director Jill Dunphy said Cardimen was the right man for the job. "I think that was really his niche," she said. "He loved that. (But) he took it on at probably the worst point in economic times."

"His frustration was that the community seemed to take (Meadow Brook Hall and Music Festival) for granted."

Cardimen wasn't long for Oakland University anyway. His mentor, former university president Joe Champagne, quit OU to run Crittenton Hospital in Rochester, and Cardimen found himself alienated without his powerful ally.

Under Champagne, Cardimen acted as liaison to the many businesses sprouting in the Oakland

■ 'They're going to put me up as Moses if I can pull this one off.'

Frank Cardimen Jr.
Traffic Improvement
Association

Technology Park around the university. But a new president meant less emphasis on the tech park and Cardimen could see the handwriting on the wall.

"The philosophies were totally opposite," he said, "both in treating people and in the direction of the university."

Caught in traffic

Cardimen had been on the board of directors for the Traffic Improvement Association, but no one expected TIA founder and director Bruce Madsen to retire. When he did, Cardimen was asked to step in. "I was very fortunate," he said.

Two big reasons he took the job, Cardimen said, were financial stability and a Bloomfield Township location that had remained constant for 27 years. Then Oakland County announced it was cutting its annual \$25,000 grant to TIA, and the owner of the building TIA occupies is evicting Cardimen so that a new bank might be born. "I'm beginning to feel a little snakebitten," Cardimen said.

Yet he possesses an abundance of vocational enthusiasm for a snakebitten man. He talks about traffic improvement with a passion that most people can only work up when they're amidst a river of cars behind a cement mixer going uphill in the rain at 5 p.m. Friday.

True believer

For a man who never worked in the traffic field before, Cardimen can spout statistics and expound on the particulars like a true believer.

The foundation of TIA's work is collecting data on accidents. The staff of four, including Cardimen, analyze state police statistics for accidents in Oakland County and develop records on location, severity and frequency of accidents. This gives some idea as



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Moving results: Rochester Hills resident Frank Cardimen Jr. heads the Traffic Improvement Association after a 13-year career at Oakland University.

to how hazardous a given intersection might be and what improvements ought to occur.

Another TIA program has Cardimen excited, but he's realist enough not to predict great success. With a \$400,000 grant from the federal government, TIA will study traffic flow in two areas: The Oakland Technology Park in Auburn Hills and Rochester Hills and the 12 Oaks Mall area in Novi.

Hail Moses

The plan is to reduce peak traffic at rush hour. Various solutions have been discussed: Convincing

employers to stagger work hours. Increase the number of employees who work at home. And, of course, carpooling.

The tech park study is relatively easy, Cardimen said, because it's a matter of surveying employees of all the companies therein. The 12 Oaks Mall study is more difficult because you're dealing with different people all the time, shoppers.

Cardimen is hopeful, but skeptical, that congestion regression can be achieved.

"They're going to put me up as Moses if I can pull this one off," Cardimen said.

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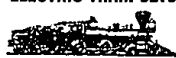
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Callers beware: New area code kicks in

Blame it on the fax machines.

For the first time since 1947, southeast Michigan has a new area code, 810, which splits the former 313 code area in half along Eight Mile Road.

Wayne County residents, except for a few Livonia inhabitants, retain 313 for an area code. All Oakland County residents get 810.

Ameritech officials say the new area code is necessary because new ways to use phone lines keep being invented. "Designers of the original area code plan back in the 1940s could not have antici-

ated just how quick available numbers would be used up by the skyrocketing popularity of personal pagers, cellular mobile telephones, computer modems and fax machines," said Ameritech area code manager Dean Hovey.

More than three million new phone numbers have been created by the new area code for southeast Michigan. Even so, Ameritech expects to reach capacity again in 20 years.

Ameritech spokesman Leon Sewell reports that some people have had difficulty getting calls to go through when they dial the new

area code. But the fault lies in non-Ameritech phone-line switches that haven't been programmed to recognize 810 as an area code, Sewell said. This problem is expected to be fixed soon, as the switch owners are notified.

Ameritech is anxious to have it known that the new area code won't make anyone's phone bill higher. Calling Southfield from Redford will still be a local call, even though the caller has to dial 1-810 to do it. No call that was local before will be long-distance now, Ameritech says.

Also, calls will still go through

using 313 until Aug. 10 so that we all might grow accustomed to the change. After that, Wayne County residents calling individuals in Oakland, Sanilac, Lapeer, St. Clair, Genesee and Macomb counties must dial 810 to do so. Oakland County residents calling folks in Wayne, Washtenaw and Monroe counties must dial 313.

For additional data on area codes, call (800) 831-8989.

Also, calls will still go through



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