

First phase of connector opens today

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Some short-term congestion in the bitter pill motorists will have to swallow to get the much-needed traffic relief from M-5, the Haggerty Connector.

This morning (Thursday), Gov. John Engler will be on hand with state and local officials to celebrate the opening of the connector between the north-south route to 12 Mile Road in Novi, just west of the Farmington Hills border.

Although it will take a lot of pressure off several interchanges in the Farmington area, there will be some new congestion once motorists discover the M-5 option.

"First, motorists won't be aware of it (ramp connecting M-5 and 12 Mile), so there won't be much effect on traffic," said Sgt. Ray Cranston, traffic supervisor with the Farmington Hills police. "Then they'll notice it and really use it. But they'll probably overuse it."

That will create a "spike" on the graph of highway accidents caused by too much traffic that comes with every new connection of the highway network, Cranston said. But once the "natural level-

ing" of traffic takes place, as motorists find the best new route, there will be less pressure on other interchanges.

The governor is speaking this morning at 9:30 a.m. at the site. The four ramps involved will be open to motorists by 4 p.m.

The outlet for traffic from 12 Mile will help connect 1-275 northbound directly to 12 Mile and will connect westbound 1-696 to 12 Mile eastbound and eastbound M-5 (formerly M-102) to 12 Mile.

"There's going to be a noticeable effect on Orchard Lake (which is currently the only Farmington Hills interchange to 1-696)," said Hills city manager Bill Costick. "People will have more options."

The ramp openings, only a phase in the project, will also alleviate traffic on 12, 13 and 14 Mile roads, as well as lessen traffic on Orchard Lake, Costick said.

There is a down side to the new ramp, Costick said. "People will still have to get down to Haggerty," he said, adding that that road is at capacity now.

Condo from page 1A

stand of trees, provide a water-detention basin, and offer condominiums in the 2,500-2,800 square foot range.

Councilman Aldo Vagnoni, a critic of how land use for open space has been determined in other residential projects, took exception to Costick's analysis of the open space, saying Costick had said there is 2.5 acres of "usable" open space on the property. Costick said there is 1.9 acres of

usable open space, as required, and .7 acre for the detention basin.

Mayor Larry Lichtman and Councilman Jon Grant took exception to Vagnoni's questioning of Costick.

"You continue to talk down to our staff and consultants," Grant said to Vagnoni. "This is 100-percent-accurate information. You're just doing this in order to make yourself look good."

Road from page 1A

Dan Potter, director of special services, said to convert the hall back into a gym, with retractable basketball baskets and removable carpet, would cost about \$50,000. In addition, some groups that use the space are concerned that the change would hurt the hall's acoustics and its aesthetics.

Potter said extra costs outside and inside the ring the city bought from the Sisters of Mercy mean that the gym improvements would push the city about \$25,000 over what it had budgeted.

Councilman Jon Grant said he wanted to be sure the acoustics of a reworked hall would still be good for groups like the Farmington Area Philharmonic.

Potter and Costick said they would return to the council an analysis of the possible effects of the conversion, and other options, such as that suggested by councilwoman Nancy Bates. Bates suggested that money collected from events at the center be used to lease space elsewhere for other groups if need be.



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Marian High School

GOP splits over extending pact

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Robert Schiller got an extended contract as state superintendent of public instruction despite an open split among Republican members of the State Board of Education.

The vote was 6-2. Four Democrats and two Republicans supported the extension of Schiller's contract by a year to Feb. 2, 1997. Two Republicans — Gary Wolfram of Hillsdale and Katherine DeGrow of Eaton Rapids, both appointed by Gov. John Engler to fill vacancies — voted no.

"My preference is to wait until after the election," said Wolfram, a Hillsdale College professor and the board's anti-government guru. "After the election, certainly one member will be different. If we replace Annette Miller (D-Huntington Woods) with Clark Durant (Republican nominee from Grosse Pointe), possibly the direction of the board will be different."

Three other board members immediately clapped down Wolfram. "The question is our mandate as a board, not individuals' mandates," said Barbara Roberts Mason, D-Lansing. "He (Schiller) has come a long way in a year. There's been improvement."

"Under his contract, we have to evaluate him by October," added Kathleen Straus, D-Detroit. "We have a deadline."

"The evaluation should be done by people working with him the longest possible time," said Dorothy Beardmore, R-Rochester Hills. "It would be the height of irresponsibility (to wait for a new member). We have a range of philosophies (on the board), but we have a unifying theme — the interest of young people."

Beardmore's rebuke of Wolfram underscored the growing rift in Republican ranks between (a) moderates who still like the state's strong constitutional role in supervising public education and (b) conservatives who would wipe out the State Board and repeal curriculum laws.

DeGrow voted no, not to protest Schiller's work but because she opposed extending his contract so far into the future — from 1996 to 1997.

Supporting Schiller's contract were Democrats Miller, Mason, Guedesindo Salas of East Lansing and Straus, and Republicans

Beardmore and Marilyn Lundy of Detroit.

Currently the State Board is split 4-4 between the parties. Two Democrats' terms expire this year.

Miller, who isn't seeking reelection, and Salas, a Michigan State University professor. Republicans nominated Clark Durant, a conservative Detroit lawyer whose base ground is in private schools, and Sharon Wise, a party leader from Owosso with no school board experience. Pollsters predict a Republican victory Nov. 8.

Gov. John Engler, who dominated the GOP convention in August, said of those nominees: "I'm not interested in having a better bureaucracy. I'm interested in having no bureaucracy. I think policy ought to dominate over process," he said in an interview last week.

The eight board members filled out individual evaluations of Schiller, who heads the State Department of Education. The board co-presidents, Miller and DeGrow, compiled them.

Highlights:

■ His overall performance is satisfactory.

■ The board is "especially pleased" with his visibility as an education spokesperson.

■ Further improvement is needed in long-range planning and goal-setting.

■ Departmental morale isn't good. Some employees are doing two or three jobs.

Afterward, Schiller said he was "grateful for the opportunity to continue our agenda for the next several years."

Hired by the board in December 1991, Schiller, now 47, heads a department whose staff has been given by a 1992 reorganization, with many posts shifted into the Department of Labor. Christian fundamentalists have also attacked the department and state curriculum laws.

Schiller's college work was in economics, English literature and educational administration. After earning his Ed.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, he changed jobs nearly every two years. Most of his career has been spent in his native Delaware, New Jersey, Mississippi and Louisiana. He was deputy state superintendent in Delaware when he took the Michigan job.

Heritage haunts up hike

Farmington Hills' Heritage Park will be one scary place Friday-Saturday, Oct. 28-29, when the inaugural Halloween Haunted Hike will take place.

Self-guided hikes for children older than 7 years of age and adults "through" the "haunted" hills and woodlands of Heritage Park will be available 7:30-9:30

p.m. Friday and Saturday. Farmington Hills' Recreation Division and several community groups have prepared scary stations for hikers to encounter along the haunted trail. Cost is \$2 for a youth ticket (\$1 and under) and \$3 for an adult ticket.

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