

3-year plan lays groundwork for road construction

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Federal, state and regional officials used a gimmick called "advanced construct" to break the logjam over \$2 billion in road funding.

The executive committee of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments voted unanimous approval Friday of a three-year plan that puts an additional \$27 million in federal aid into local

projects this year. It ended a four-month shootout with Gov. John Engler's administration over who would get the lions share of federal road aid.

Instead of "pay as you go," said SEMCOG executive director John Amberger, some projects will be funded in advance by state and local units — "a system the feds call 'advance construct.' That means paying for some projects over a period of time instead of

immediately in a lump sum," said Amberger, a Livonia resident.

"While new to local governments in southeast Michigan, advanced construct has been used by Michigan and other states for some time," Amberger said.

Bob Wilkies, new director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, explained: "We can spend our money this year and use next year's (federal) money to

replace it." State and local units will put up to \$30 million of their own money in anticipation of \$822 million in future federal aid, he said.

"Every motorist has to bail this resolution," said Oakland County Commissioner David Moffitt, Farmington Hills. "The 1996 construction season will not be delayed," he added, pointing to the states plan to widen Eight Mile Road from Farmington Road to Halsted/Nowburgh on the Farmington Hills-Livonia border. There was no debate but much applause from local delegates on the SEMCOG executive committee.

"A big win," said deputy Oakland County Executive John Grubbin, MDOT's original plan was to let the Oakland County Road Commission (OCRC) have a total of \$6.8 million in the next three years. The new deal gives Oakland a total of \$35.6 million — \$18.6 million in 1996, \$8.4 million in 1997 and \$8.6 million in 1998.

Kent O. Bair, managing director of the OCRC, said these area projects are scheduled for 1996 with federal aid following:

- 13 Mile from Meadowbrook to Haggerty in Novi — pave a gravel road, \$800,000.
- Kent Lake Road from Grand River to Kensington Metropark entrance — resurface \$200,000 federal.
- 13 Mile from Greenfield to Woodward in Royal Oak — resurface four lanes, curb, gutter lights and drainage — \$1.9 million federal.
- Greenfield from Eight to Nine

Mile in Southfield and Oak Park — reconstruct to four-lane boulevard, \$4.6 million.

- Novi Road from 12 1/4 Mile to 13 Mile in Novi — resurface, \$100,000 federal.

Scheduled for 1997 are:

- Hamlin Road from Crooks to Livernols in Rochester Hills — 1.6 miles of widening to a four-lane boulevard, \$1.1 million federal.

- Cooley Lake Road from Union Lake to Williams Lake roads in Commerce — widen 0.8 miles to five lanes, \$755,000 federal.

- Boulevard from I-76 to Squirrel — 1.6 miles of widening to five lanes, \$600,000 federal.

Scheduled for 1998:

- Long Lake Road from Farmington to Carnaby in Troy — widen 1.6 miles to five lanes, \$3.9 million federal.

- Maple from Hunter to Adams in Birmingham — widen to five lanes, \$651,000 federal.

- Commerce Road from Union Lake to Hiller — resurface three miles, \$378,000 federal.

- Pontiac Trail from Haggerty to Old Orchard — resurface 5.8 miles, \$571,000 federal.

SEMCOG's Amberger called the agreement a good one, fair to local transportation projects and fair to the state's transportation priorities.

State priorities included rebuilding the Davison Freeway in Detroit, extending the Haggerty Road connector in western Oakland County, widening I-96 between Brighton and Howell in Livingston County and upgrading M-59 to freeway standards in Macomb County.

Besides the new funding mechanism, Amberger said the agreement restored the traditional 75-25 split of federal transportation funds between state and county-local projects. MDOT's original plan would have shifted the split to 85-15 in the first year.

Amberger said the new three-year transportation improvement plan (TIP) is "not a finished product. It does not yet identify all of the projects which will be funded through the flexible techniques." He promised more details at the executive committees April 26 meeting.

Nor does the new TIP address the possibility of a legislative increase in the state fuel tax for roads. Failure of Engler and the Legislature to agree on terms of a fuel tax hike meant \$360 million less revenue and helped precipitate the SEMCOG-MDOT shootout.

The breakthrough came Wednesday in a meeting called by Rodney Slater, an Eastern Michigan University graduate working for President Clinton's Federal Highway Administration. Slater praised SEMCOG and MDOT negotiators, adding that use of advanced construct funding will enable \$4 billion to \$6 billion more work to be done nationwide.

SEMCOG negotiators included: for Oakland County, deputy executive John Grubbin and board chair John McCollough, R-Royal Oak; for Wayne County, deputy executive Michael Duggan; SEMCOG chair Joan Buser, supervisor of Oakland Township; Amberger and transportation manager Carmine Palombo of Livonia.

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- Reside, attend school, or be employed in Rochester, Rochester Hills, Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Township, Oakland Township, Troy, Sterling Heights, Utica, Birmingham and West Bloomfield.

Trust funds set

In the wake of last week's plane crash in Croatia, which took the life of Guardian executive David L. Ford and 34 others, trust funds have been arranged by Guardian for the two children of David Ford — Kathryn, 11, and Douglas, 9. The funds will provide for the children's future education and other appropriate needs.

Ford's close personal friend and managing director of Guardian Europe, James Moore, has been named a trustee of the trust funds. Guardian Industries launched the two funds with a corporate donation of \$25,000. Guardian employees, friends of the Ford family and people who simply want to contribute are eligible to make donations.

All donations will be deposited equally into the two funds and will be acknowledged to the Ford family. Checks should be made payable to James Moore, trustee, and mailed to one of the following locations: c Guardian Industries Corp., 2399 Harmon Road, Auburn Hills, Mich. 48326-1714, Attn: Kathryn Ford & Douglas Ford Trust Funds; or, to cGuardian Europe S.A., L-3452 Dudelange, Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Attn: Kathryn Ford & Douglas Ford Trust Funds.

"When we learned of David's death, our thoughts went immediately to his wife and two children," said William Davidson, president and CEO of Guardian Industries Corporation. "To provide for the financial future of his children was our primary concern. While David's life has been cut tragically short, we want to ensure that his legacy lives on through his children."

Ford, 43, was one of 12 U.S. business executives accompanying U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ronald R. Brown on the ill-fated commercial trade mission to Bosnia and Croatia. Secretary Brown's plane crashed into the Croatian hillside on Wednesday, April 3, en route from Tuzla, Bosnia to Dubrovnik, Croatia.

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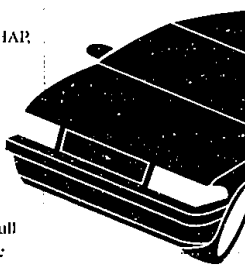
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