Executive focuses on roads

BY PAT MURPHY STAPF WRITER

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STATY WAITER

"A dangerous thing happened as I was driving down here conight. I hit a patch of pavement."

This quip from Oakland County Executive I. Brooks Patterson prompted laughs Saturday at the annual Republican banquet in honor of Abraham Lincoln.

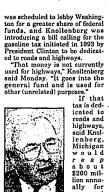
Potholes and other rain dimprovements are expected to be center stage as Patterson delivers his annual State of the County address at the Oakland County address at the Oakland County address at the Oakland County Auditorium.

The executive has already announced a plant to go to the voters, if necessary, to raise money for roads repairs and highway maintenance. In onights address has expected to give an update on his plan to launch a petition drive on raising the states tax on gasoline. If the drive successfully garnered 300,000 signatures, the state could be voting on raising the gasoline tax this fall.

Just how much of a tax hike is needed is up in the air. The executive initially called for a 6.5-cent increase to raise about \$338 million annually. But on Monday—at a joint press conference with U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg—the executive trimmed the like to 5 cents a gallon, providing state officials could be persuaded to earmark some of the current sales tax on gasoline for roads.

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current sales tax on gasoline for roads.
Good roads are crucial to Patterson's vision for Oakland County. As he has said repeated, Butterson's continue to come to Oakland County if the roads aren't in good shope.
Oakland's roads right now are 'deplorable.' Patterson said Monday. If the governor and legislators don't move to repair the roads, he will go directly to voters with his petition drive.
The governor and Knollenberg are using other approaches to get new money for roads, Patterson acknowledged. John Engler



Oakland County Board of Com-missioners calling for a 10 cent per gallon increase phased in over three years.

But State Rep. Barbara J. Dobb, R-Union Lake, isn't so sure. "A lot of people complain about the roads," she said. "But very few are willing to pay to fix them."

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As for Patterson's pledge to go to the voters if the legislature doesn't act, Dobb hinted that she might welcome the move. "I hope Brooks goes ahead," she said. "I don't think there is widespread support (for a gasoline tax hike). But if Brooks thinks there is, he should go right ahead."

So far, Gov. Engler's office has been relatively quiet about the Dokland executive's threat of petition drive if Lansing doesn't move toward raising money for roads — something Patterson said he intended as "an implied threat."

Patterson

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