



Improvements and changes are scheduled for the following Oakland County roadways. Drivers may wish to take alternate routes during the road construction periods:

■ Bingham Farms — Five miles of local roadway will be repaved with a layer of chip seal the end of July with a completion in late August. Thirteen Mile and 14 Mile roads will not be repaved since they are not local roadways.

■ Birmingham — Derby between Adams and Coolidge and Buckingham between St. Andrews and Coolidge are being resurfaced with an expected completion date of late July. Derby will be closed during construction except to residential traffic.

■ Farmington — Grand River will be widened to include a left turn lane and traffic signal at the Shiawassee intersection. Shiawassee, from Grand River to Farmington Road, will be closed during construction. Work is scheduled to begin July 15 and be completed by Sept. 30.

■ Farmington Hills — Eight Mile, between Halsted and Farmington roads, is being widened to five lanes. The project, which extends through the Farmington Hills subdivision, is expected to be completed Aug. 22. Intersections that show are possible. Expansion of the Haggerty Connector (M-5) has closed 13 Mile Road, between Haggerty and Meadowbrook, until Aug. 1. Beam repair work has started on the 10 Mile bridge over I-96/I-275 with an expected completion in late October. There will be hourly closures on I-96/I-275, and 10 Mile is restricted to one lane in each direction until July 30. Rhinosound, off of Gill Road and south of 9 Mile, has been paved with the final layer of asphalt to be added this week. The Farmington Road bridge over I-96 has shut down for deck replacement and will reopen Aug. 19. Traffic will be detoured about 12 miles, 12 Miles and Orchard Lake roads and a lane will be closed on east and westbound I-968 travelers with intermittent lane closures. Paving and drainage improvements have started at the west end of the Meadowbrook Hills subdivision near 8 Mile and Halsted. All streets will be repaved with east end work beginning in mid-July and the project completed Sept. 16.

■ Independence Township — White Lake Road near Andersonville Road is closed to through traffic. It is being widened to three lanes and realigned with Nolsey Road. Detours route drivers down Dixie Highway to Andersonville until the expected completion in November when the southern portion of White Lake Road will be turned into a cul-de-sac instead of intersecting Andersonville.

■ Novi — Expansion of the Haggerty Connector (M-5) has closed 13 Mile Road, between Haggerty

and Meadowbrook, until Aug. 1. Beam repair work has started on the 10 Mile bridge over I-96/I-275 with an expected completion in late October. There will be hourly closures on I-96/I-275 and a permanent lane closure on east and westbound 10 Mile until July 30.

■ Orchard Lake — Lakeview, Pine Tree, and Sunbeam Street in the RC Bankers Sandy Beach subdivision are being paved. The project will be finished July 16.

■ Rochester — The first phase of the Sheldon Road Extension is under construction to create a bypass through the city of Rochester. The half-mile stretch of two-lane roadway is being constructed from east Second Street to Parkdale. The roadway will be east of Miller and is expected to be open for traffic Aug. 15.

■ Rochester Hills — Hamlin Road is being reconstructed to a four-lane boulevard from M-59 to Crooks Road. The project, which is expected to be completed by the spring of 1998, will include the completion of the east-west link from north M-59 ramp to various business facilities. The roadway will be closed to traffic during M-59 and Avon Road. Old Finch, between Avon and Walton Boulevard, is expected to be closed July 23 for an asphalt overlay project and reopen in mid-September.

■ Southfield — J.L. Hudson Drive over M-10 is closed for repairs until Sept. 2. Traffic is detoured along the service drives. Mount Vernon Street bridge over the Lodge Freeway (M-10) will be closed for painting and deck work beginning July 21 and completed Aug. 19. Greenfield bridge over the Northwestern Highway (M-10) is under construction for deck replacement with southbound Greenfield closed and traffic detoured along the bridge. Lane closures will be expected Oct. 16-17.

■ Troy — Detours route drivers down the eastern border of Lathrup Village, east of the Berkshires between Winchester and 11 Mile, have been paved with intersection and driveway approach work will continue until the end of August. Residential roads east of Lahser and west of Arlington between Winchester and 11 Mile are undergoing spot concrete replacement to be completed by Oct. 31.

■ Troy — Derby between Adams and Coolidge and Buckingham between St. Andrews and Coolidge are being resurfaced with an expected completion date of late July. Derby will be closed during construction except to residential traffic.

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, detours are unknown or not planned.
Source: Local, county, city and village road officials.

— Compiled by staff writer Jennifer Placinto

Politics mangle road deal

Patterson on roads: Not enough

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Like others concerned about potholes, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson must wait until next week to see what plan, if any, the Michigan Legislature finalizes on raising the gasoline tax to finance road construction.

But from what he saw of the plan discussed by lawmakers and the governor, Patterson will undoubtedly be "woefully inadequate to address the needs of Oakland County."

State lawmakers this week were scheduled to resume efforts to reach agreement on raising the gasoline tax. Efforts stalled last week after legislators failed to reach a agreement on other aspects of the package, such as on offsetting reduction in the sales of income tax to make it "revenue neutral" for motorists.

Even so, Gov. John M. Engler was reportedly optimistic that the proposal under consideration would provide the framework for a solution next week.

"We don't know what that final package will look like," said Patterson. "I accept what they come up with as a beginning. But we still have a long way to go."

This much seems certain, Patterson said: "Oakland will not get enough money to meet its road needs. They're talking about a 4-cent per gallon increase, which will raise \$200 million a year."

"That's simply not enough," said the executive, who earlier proposed raising the gasoline tax 5 cents a gallon as the core of his road proposal. It also included Michigan getting more federal funds and shifting part of the gasoline sales tax from the general fund to road improvement.

Motorists currently pay a 6 percent sales tax on gasoline. A shift of one percent for year would generate \$57 million a year for roads.

"Michigan might get more money from the federal government (as the governor requested), but I don't think it will be enough."

Patterson said from what he knows of the package under consideration, Oakland County would receive less than \$5 million dollars for roads and highways. "We will need more than \$2 million in the near future, or we'll fall further behind," he said.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) estimates southeast Michigan will need \$23 billion for roads over the next 20 years, said the executive. "The legislature is taking a Band Aid approach to a major problem."

Patterson said he didn't necessarily disagree with those in Lansing who predict there will be no road plan this session — despite pressure for an agreement before the legislature adjourns for the summer session.

The governor wants the hike in gasoline taxes to be "revenue neutral," said Patterson. "I don't know if lawmakers and the governor can agree on a plan that does that."

One area not addressed by legislators is road jurisdiction, or which agency — the Michigan Department of Transportation or county road commissions — has control over local highways.

The House vote was 97-1 with 12 absent, and the Senate vote was 32-4 with two absent. All area members voted yes.

In other action, the House approved 99-0 a bill broadening the powers of community college boards.

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Parked on a trailer outside the State Capitol in Lansing last week was a trailer with a flashing sign that said, "Just Fix the Roads."

Sponsored by a coalition of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Manufacturers Association and 98 other groups, the sign summed up what the Michigan Legislature failed to do in an entire week of back-room negotiations. Instead:

■ Senate Republicans had an agenda dominated by cutting the overall tax load.

■ House Democrats had an agenda dominated by tax breaks for college tuition and child care.

They will try again Tuesday with a second week of overtime sessions. It will be harder than ever. "We'll be down some members," said Rep. Deborah Whyman, R-Canton, ticking off a list of lawmakers who are scheduled for family trips, children's weddings, anniversaries and the like.

In a nutshell, the Senate passed a package of bills featuring a net tax reduction over five years, but the House passed only one in return.

Senate OKs bills

The Senate's package called for:

■ Increasing the state gasoline 4 cents per gallon effective Aug. 1. The diesel tax was not changed, a bare minimum of 20 cents was voted yes.

■ Cutting the 6 percent sales tax on gasoline to 4 percent over four years. The rate would fall to 5 percent on the first day of 1998, 4 percent in 1999, 3 percent in 2000, and 2 percent in 2001. That final 2 percent is constitutionally dedicated to public schools and wouldn't be lost.

■ Cutting the personal income tax by raising the per-person exemption \$100 next year. Currently the exemption is \$2,500. It is indexed to inflation and is scheduled to go to \$2,600 next year. With the \$100 increase, the new exemption rate would be \$2,700 per household member. The House also passed this bill.

Community colleges will get 3.4 percent more than last in state aid.

The House and Senate put the finishing touches on the \$276 million compromise package before its Fourth of July break and sent it to the governor. It stripped out language that would have prohibited use of college funds for employees' abortions, replacing it with a non-binding statement of the Legislature's "intent" not to fund abortions.

That result had been predicted publicly by Reps. Tom Kelly, D-Wayne, and Hubert Price, D-Fenton. Most lawmakers saw the anti-abortion language as interfering with the elected boards' right to govern and unions' right to negotiate wages and fringes.

Here is how some area colleges will fare in the next fiscal year:

■ Oakland Community College — \$18.8 million, up 3.1 percent from the current year.

■ Schoolcraft College — \$10.6 million, up nearly 6 percent from the current year.

■ Wayne County Community College — \$15.9 million, up 3.2 percent.

■ Henry Ford, Dearborn — \$19.2 million, up 4.3 percent.

■ Lansing, \$28.9 million, up 4.7 percent.

The House passed its more generous version May 13, and Senate action followed early in June, but negotiators waited until the last minute to put forth a "conference report" to reconcile the differences.

The House vote was 97-1 with 12 absent, and the Senate vote was 32-4 with two absent. All area members voted yes.

The lone protest came from Rep. David Jaye, R-Macomb County, who complained of "tax-payer paid programs for minority students only, including rich minorities and foreigners." He cited the Martin Luther King Select Student program at \$1.5 million and the "minority only advanced technologies engineering tuition" line item at \$4 million.

There was evidence House

increases for Michigan residents," said Bennett, "and I intend to keep that promise. Higher gas taxes are not the answer to fixing Michigan roads. We need to look more closely at reforming the transportation system."

Bennett boasted that he won an amendment to SB 303 that "compels counties and townships to sit down together and decide how best to fix the roads. It is important that townships have a say in how road funds are allocated."

Bennett's defection had been predicted two days earlier by Peters. "It looks like they'll have to put up 20 votes themselves. I may be Bennett. That's the seat they're trying to protect."

Bennett's seat had been held by Democrats for 30 years until he won it in 1994. It is considered "leaning Republican" in the recent issue of Inside Michigan Politics newsletter.

Net tax cut

Sen. Dale Shugars, R-Portage, said the net effect of the Senate package, after four years, would be a \$110 million tax cut. In those five years:

■ The higher gasoline tax would yield \$950 million.

■ The sales tax cut on gasoline would save drivers \$910 million.

■ The higher income tax exemption would save families \$150 million.

"(Senate majority leader) Dick Posthumus was insistent on that," said Shugars.

In the first year, there would be a \$90 million net tax hike — \$190 million more for gasoline, \$30 million less for income taxes and \$70 million less for sales tax on gasoline.

Dems' plan

House Speaker Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, on July 8 announced his caucus would support a 4-cent hike in the gasoline tax — on these conditions:

■ A reduction in the personal income tax rate from 4.4 to 4.325 percent, saving the average family of four \$28.25. Statewide tax cost: \$122 million.

■ Expanding the college tuition tax credit from a maximum of \$250 to \$500. Savings to families of college students: \$36 million.

■ A child care income tax deduction of up to \$5,000 per child for working parents. Tax savings: \$17 million.

Total one-year tax cuts under the Democratic plan: \$175 million versus \$190 million increase in the fuel tax.

Hertel said his plan was backed by County Executives Ed McNamara, a Wayne County Democrat, and L. Brooks Patterson, an Oakland County Republican.

Breakdown'

Two lawmakers said part of the breakdown had to do with communications to the Senate Democratic caucus.

"If the governor were serious, the dialog would be there," said Senate minority leader John Cherry, D-Clio. "Our conclusion is that they're not serious about getting out of here."

"Their feelings were hurt," said Rep. Andrew Raczkowski, R-Farmington Hills, of the Senate Democrats. "We had a deal, but the deal broke down. Senate Democrats felt communications to their lines weren't there."

Raczkowski had a list of amendments, including improved revenue sharing for local units. "But we never got to vote," he said.

Raczkowski promised to attend Tuesday's session but hoped it will be short because he has been accepted to a University of Virginia program for emerging political leaders.

Nature center offers fun for family summer activities

Independence Oaks Nature Center is offering several summer activities including a garden seminar from 7:30-9:30 p.m., July 17, and the art of aromatherapy will be featured from 7:30-9:30 p.m., Aug. 21.

Preregistration is required for all nature programs. A vehicle entry fee of \$8 will be charged for programs beginning before 4 p.m.

— Compiled by staff writer Jennifer Placinto

Independence Oaks Nature Center is on Sashawaw Road, 2 1/2 miles north of I-75 near Clarkston.

For more information, call (248) 625-6473 or TDD (248) 858-1884 for more information or to visit the Oakland County Parks website at www.co.oakland.mi.us.