

Officials pledge to start repairs

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

New construction work is expected to get under way as early as next week, now that Gov. John Engler has signed legislation providing \$89 million for roads statewide, including \$3.6 million for Oakland County.

"You (Road Commission for Oakland County) can tell your contractors to stand by," Engler's spokesperson John Truscott said Monday after the governor signed the legislation.

Essentially the legislation allows state officials to dip into interest accruing in the Budget Stabilization Fund (also known as the rainy day fund) and the state's general fund.

Although the legislation was approved July 16, the money it provided wasn't available until it was signed by the governor.

Road commissioner Rudy Lozano of Clarkston said the governor's signing the legislation will enable road crews to take advantage of whatever good weather remains in the 1997 construction season.

Money raised from the four-cent hike in gasoline taxes —

which took effect Aug. 1 — won't filter into Oakland County until sometime in October, according to Brent O. Bair, managing director of the road commission.

But money made available from the rainy day and general fund will be put to use immediately. Road repairs "will be swift and noticeable," Bair said.

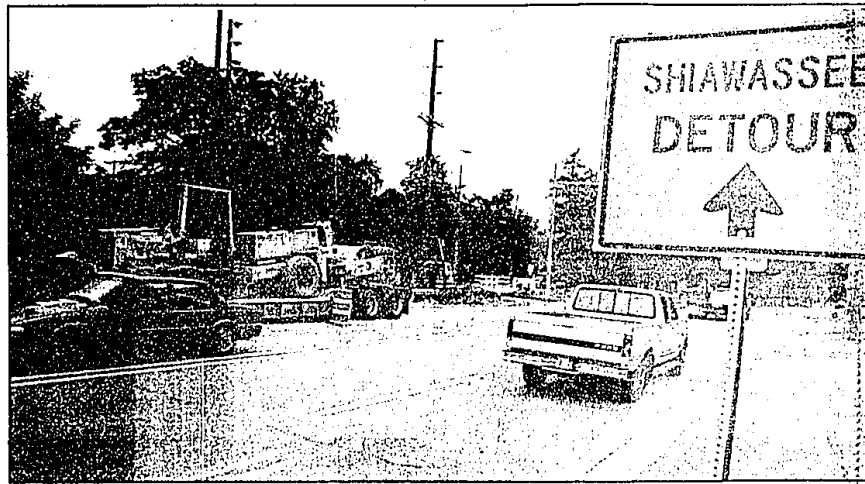
"We have already contacted contractors," Bair said earlier this month at a press conference. "As soon as we receive the \$3.6 million, we're going to make good on the pledge."

The pledge Bair and others made committed every cent of new road money to repairing area roads riddled with potholes.

Bair said \$2.5 million of the money provided by Monday's signing will be used for 42 miles of preservation overlays on existing roads and more than \$600,000 will be spent on concrete road repairs (fixing potholes).

The remaining \$500,000 will put tons of gravel on 28 miles of unpaved roads to improve drainage and drivability.

While road officials are anxious to take advantage of the remaining construction season,



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

Detour ahead: Travelers who normally use Shiawassee in Farmington are being detoured onto Grand River due to Shiawassee's widening. More roadwork is starting around the county now that funds have been made available throughout Oakland County. The funds for future projects come from the state's rainy day fund and, later, from an increase in the state gas tax.

they will not be over anxious or hasty, said Gerald Holmberg, deputy manager of the road commission. "We've been waiting too long for this money to allow any

of it to be wasted by being hasty," he said.

New gas tax revenues, estimated at \$7 million in 1998, will be used as follows:

■ \$3 million to construct 10 miles of major county roads.
■ \$3 million to resurface 50 miles of county roads.

■ \$500,000 for new gravel on 28 miles of unpaved roads.
■ \$500,000 for concrete road repairs.

County targets these area roads

The following is a list of road repairs that work crews expect to begin as early as this week:

■ **Lyon Township:** Silver Lake Road, Kent Lake and Dixboro; Eight Mile between Currie and Napier; Pontiac Trail, Grand River and south to the curve; and Martindale from Pontiac Trail to Ten Mile.

■ **Milford Township:** Wixom Road from the Milford Village limit to south Burns and Cooley Lake from Carey to Duck Lake.

■ **Groveland Township:** Groveland Road, Van to Thayer; Grange Hall, Dixie Highway to Wildwood; and Tripp Road, Dixie to Grange Hall.

■ **Holly Township:** Fish Lake Road, north of Houser to Grange Hall.

■ **Independence Township:** White Lake Road, Clement to Dixie.

■ **Oxford Township:** Oakwood, Coats to M-24.

■ **Oakland Township:** Orion Road south of Lake George.

■ **Orion Township:** Baldwin Road, Judah to Walden; Joelyn Road north of railroad tracks to Silverbell; Kern Road, Silverbell to Gunn; Coats Road, Indian-

wood to Drahner; Indian Lake Road, M-24 to Lake George; and Conklin, about half a mile north of Miller.

■ **Auburn Hills:** Opdyke, Auburn to South, and Featherstone 300 feet north; and Adams, between M-59 and Auburn.

■ **Rochester:** Parkdale, city limits to Dequindre.

■ **Rochester Hills:** Avon Road, between John R. and Overlay, between Livernois and Old Perch, and west of Rochester to Livernois; west of Dequindre; Adam between Walton and south Hillendale and from north of Avon, south one mile; South Boulevard, between Crooks & Coolidge;

■ **West Bloomfield:** Walnut Lake Road, from 1,000 feet west of Middlebelt to I-96; Maple Road, Haggerty to Orchard Lake; Halsted Road, Walnut Lake to Maple; Oakley Park Road, from Bunker to Haggerty; and Orchard Lake Road between Pontiac and Maple.

■ **Bloomfield Township:** Opdyke Road, from South to Hickory Grove; Franklin Road, between Maple and Fourteen Mile; Walnut Lake, Inkster to Franklin.

■ **Troy:** Crooks Road, one tenth of a mile south of Big Beaver; Dequindre, between Square Lake and Long Lake, and three tenths of a mile south of South Boulevard; and east-bound Maple Road, between Crooks and Dequindre.

■ **Waterford:** Clintonville Road, from south of Mann Road to Lake Angelus; and Crescent Lake Road, near Elizabeth Lake Road.

■ **Novi:** Grand River, Novi to Haggerty.

■ **Farmington Hills:** Orchard Lake Road, between 1-698 and Fourteen Mile Road.

■ **Addison Township:** Rochester Road, north of Mack; and Drahner Road, Lake George to Hoanor, and Rochester to Walker.

■ **White Lake Township:** Pontiac Lake Road, Brendel to Teggerdine; and Cedar Island Road, Ford to Boggie Lake Road.

■ **Brandon Township:** Oakhill Road, from M-16, west for three miles.

■ **Rose Township:** Tipisco Lake Road, from Demode, 1.6 miles south; and Fish Lake Road, from Munger, 1.5 miles north.



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HORTON

Not waiting: Not waiting for new funds, the City of Troy was at work this week on Rochester Road, which made for some traffic tie-ups. Much more work will be done throughout Oakland County, say officials, through the remainder of the construction season.

Parents who will be driving their students to school this week may want to take note of construction in the following areas:



■ **Bingham Farms:** Due to deteriorating roads, all five miles of local roadway are being repaved with a layer of chip seal to be completed by the end of September. Thirteen Mile and 14 Mile roads will not be repaved since they are not local roadways.

■ **Birmingham:** Pierce between Brown and Lincoln and Adams, between the northern city limits and Adams, are being resurfaced. Both projects are set for a mid-September completion. Detours for the Adams project will route northbound traffic along Woodward and southbound traffic will be reduced to one lane.

■ **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 which should be completed by Sept. 30. The I-96 business loop, between Gill and Shiawassee, is being widened to include a center turn lane. One lane on northbound Shiawassee and one lane on southbound Grand River may be closed at any time. Shiawassee will be closed and traffic detoured for a maximum of 45 days. One lane of westbound Shiawassee at the south leg of Farmington Road will also be closed.

■ **Farmington Hills:** Eight Mile, between Halsted and Farmington roads, is being widened to five lanes. The project, which extends through the Farmington Road intersection, is expected to be completed Aug. 22. Intermittent lane closures are possible. Expansion of the Haggerty Connector (M-6) has closed 13 Mile Road, between Haggerty and Meadowbrook, until the end of August. Beam repair work has started on the 10 Mile bridge over I-96/1-275 with an expected completion in late October. There will be hourly closures on I-96/1-275, and 10 Mile is restricted to one lane in each direction until mid-to-late August. 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 the project to be 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 Noley 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-6) has closed 13 Mile Road, between Haggerty and Meadowbrook, until Aug. 31. Beam repair work has started on the 10 Mile bridge over I-96/1-275 with an expected completion in late October. There will be hourly closures on I-96/1-275 and a permanent lane closure on east and westbound 10 Mile until mid-to-late August.

■ **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 the new M-59 ramp to various business facilities. The roadway is closed, except for local traffic, with detours across M-59 and Avon Road. Old Perch, between Avon and Walton Boulevard, is closed for asphalt overlay and reopen in mid-September. Access for Old Perch residents and necessary services will be maintained.

■ **Southfield:** Mt. Vernon bridge over the Lodge Freeway (M-10) will be closed for painting and deck work beginning mid-August. J.L. Hudson Drive over M-10 is closed for repairs until Sept. 2. Traffic is detoured along the service drives. During construction, northbound M-10 will be completely closed from Greenfield to J.L. Hudson. Detours are posted. Hudson and the left lane of southbound M-10 will be closed. Greenfield bridge over the Northwestern Highway (M-10) is under construction for deck replacement with southbound Greenfield closed and traffic detoured along Pembroke. Lanes are expected to reopen Oct. 30, 1997. Residential roadways east of Lahser and west of Arlington between Winchester and 11 Mile are undergoing spot concrete replacement to be completed by Oct. 31.

■ **Troy:** Adams, between the northern city limit and M-59, and M-59, are being resurfaced with a mid-September completion. Northbound traffic will be detoured along Woodward and southbound traffic will be reduced to one lane.

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

— Compiled by staff writer Jennifer Placinto

Transplant requires abstinence

BY PAT MURPHY
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As a prisoner, Mindy R. Brass has presumably been abstinent from drugs since being incarcerated in 1991.

If so, her prior use of cocaine "would not be an issue," according to a cardiologist on the transplant team at the University of Michigan Medical Center that is being asked to evaluate Brass and place her on the national list of potential new heart recipients.

Continued drug use, however, is another story, according to Keith D. Aaronson of the cardiology division of the Department of Internal Medicine at the U of M Medical Center.

Potential organ recipients should be free from all common substances of abuse — illicit drugs, excessive alcohol and cigarettes — for at least six months, Aaronson said Thursday through press spokesman David Wilkins.

The presumption that Brass has been "substance free" since going to prison almost six years ago was called into question by Dr. Robert Samuel Decosta Higgins, surgical director of the transplant team at Henry Ford Hospital that rejected Brass as a transplant candidate.

"Miss Brass' drug-seeking behavior in prison affirms our decision that she is not an appropriate candidate for something as scarce as a new heart," said Higgins, a Birmingham resident who is director of thoracic trans-

plant for the Henry Ford Health System.

Higgins was referring to Brass' continued smoking, reportedly 3 to 5 cigarettes daily, and prison disciplinary action against her involving drugs.

Brass was twice disciplined for drug-related infractions, according to the Michigan Department of Corrections. The infractions were considered "minor," according to prison spokesperson Matt Davis.

In November 1994, Brass lost most privileges for seven days — including the right to call her daughter in California — after she was cited for the "presence of cocaine in her urinalysis," according to Davis.

The following October, Brass was cited for possession of an unauthorized prescription, an offense for which she lost privileges — using the telephone, socializing at meals, etc. — for two days, he said.

Brass' record also shows four other minor disciplinary actions — for "insolence" or disobeying a direct order — Davis said.

"These are very minor offenses," he continued. "We have people in here who lose their privileges and for years," he said.

But even if her offenses are minor, the two "drug seeking" offenses indicate a continuing problem, said physician Higgins. "They indicate Brass' substance abuse problems need to be addressed before she should be listed as a potential recipient for a new heart."

Her status as an inmate — sentenced to life in prison under Michigan's controversial drug-lifer law — was not an overriding consideration in the decision to reject Brass as a transplant candidate, the physician said.

"Her behavior is," Higgins said. "I know that Mindy still shies. We would hope that any patient who is so sick that he or she would require extraordinary medical care would do whatever it took to improve their cardiovascular health."

As a relatively young woman who is otherwise healthy, Brass has a compelling case for heart transplant, said Higgins. "I feel bad for her personally."

"But that doesn't change the fact that offering her something as significant as a heart transplant would be contrary to what we think is prudent medical advice," said Higgins.

Brass was 34 in 1991 when two associates were arrested in Troy after trying to sell a kilo of cocaine to undercover police. She was sentenced to live in prison with no chance of parole under Michigan's drug-lifer law that mandates life in prison for anyone convicted of trafficking in 650 grams or more of cocaine or heroin.

Brass admits having used cocaine occasionally with friends and business associates when she was a marketing executive in San Diego. But she said it did not interfere with her business dealings or her obligations as a single mother.