

Orchard Lk Rd
Northwestern Hwy

SOUTH
10



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BECKMAN

Planning: Plans are underway to extend Northwestern Highway to the M-5/Haggerty connector. Farmington Hills agreed to administer the \$1.5 million project.

Northwestern Highway extension gets attention

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

A preliminary engineering study of the proposed construction of the Northwestern Connector is expected to get under way in the next few weeks.

The study, which is the next step in the process of bringing the project to fruition, became possible when the city of Farmington Hills agreed to administer the \$1.5 million project.

In addition to approving the city's role in the study, the city council Sept. 28 also voted to award the contract to Snell Environmental Group Inc. of Lansing.

The connector consortium of Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield Township, the Oakland County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) asked the Hills to administer the study because the road commission, which was originally slated to do it, is in a lawsuit over the fund-

ing and routing of it with MDOT. The Northwestern Connector is to eventually extend Northwestern Highway north and west, where it will tie into the M-5/Haggerty Road Connector now under construction.

Called a "pre-preliminary engineering and environmental assessment" study, the project is expected to take about two years and will be financed with state and federal funding through MDOT, according to Hills Public Services Director Tom Binzell.

There are provisions for the city to recover some of the staff costs for administering the study, he said.

The study's purpose, Binzell said, is to provide "a detailed analysis of actually how the proposed alignment of the Connector will work. This is called the 'early preliminary engineering phase'."

Binzell said the public will become more aware of the study later on, when public forums and meetings are held.

However, additional funding of the rest of the early phase is in question at present, he said.

MDOT has pledged \$26 million to the early phase, he said, but "unfortunately, the alignment that was chosen" along Orchard Lake Road and Maple Road "has a preliminary estimate in excess of \$50 million."

Needed are sources of additional funding for the entire early phase and "a prioritization of the different components," he said.

The connector is to be a six-lane boulevard extension of Northwestern along Orchard Lake, with Maple Road west of that being widened to four lanes out to the M-5/Haggerty connector.

The original plan by MDOT was to extend Northwestern diagonally across West Bloomfield to M-59. That plan was scrapped when the township changed its master plan, making the route no longer possible.

Police ticket 18 in Hills undercover tobacco sting

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
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Forty-four businesses that sell tobacco products in Farmington Hills are breathing easier today. But another 18 are not because employees sold tobacco products to teens in a police department sting Friday.

"They are not training their employees," said Police Chief Bill Dwyer.

Under federal law and city ordinance — that went into effect July 6 — retailers are required to ask for identification for anyone younger than 27 who asks to buy tobacco products.

Dwyer expressed disappointment in the 18 retailers who were ticketed for a misdemeanor. The local penalty, which is tougher than that imposed under state law, carries a maximum \$600 fine and 90 days in jail.

Just two of the 18 who were issued violations Friday were previously ticketed in a similar sting in February when 20 of the city's 62 businesses that sell

tobacco products.

"That says that the others ones who were ticketed in February have made a good effort," Dwyer said.

Following the February undercover operation, the police department initiated a program, "Operation Tobacco Cooperation," May 1 during which retailers were educated on federal, state and local tobacco ordinances. Retailers also received educational and promotional materials. Those retailers who did not participate in the cooperation program were then visited by officers and given the instructional materials, Dwyer said.

In the tobacco stings, only the individuals who sold tobacco products were ticketed. Businesses do not face penalties, unlike for violations of the alcohol ordinance, which police also enforce in sting operations. The sting included three teens, decoys, who would enter the businesses and attempt to buy cigarettes. The decoys entered the businesses without identification and with instructions to

refrain from using trickery or arguing with store clerks when attempting to buy a pack of cigarettes. They also wore typical teen clothing, Dwyer said.

The following retailers were ticketed:

- Wine Tasters, 30340 Nine Mile
- Arbor Drugs, 22250 Middlebelt
- Total, 24242 Middlebelt
- Clark, 24205 Orchard Lake
- 7-Eleven, 29318 Orchard Lake
- Amoco, 29435 Orchard Lake
- Marathon, 32950 Middlebelt (also ticketed in February)
- Kmart, 30800 Orchard Lake (also ticketed in February)
- Kroger, 37650 12 Mile
- Arbor Drugs, 37700 12 Mile
- Warren Prescriptions, 32910 Middlebelt
- Speedway, 33430 Eight Mile
- Shell Oil, 22063 Farmington
- Speedway, 29250 Eight Mile
- Citgo, 29036 Grand River
- Rite-Aid, 35694 Grand River
- Mobil, 37810 Grand River
- Amoco, 37410 Grand River

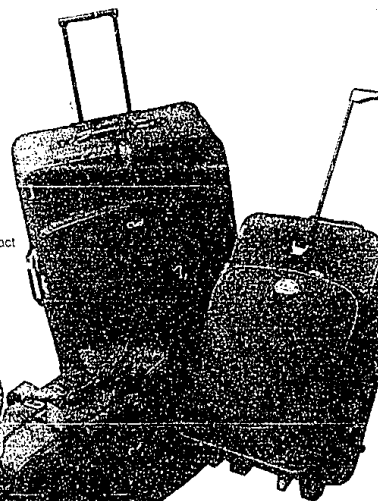
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