

# Road widening may be defeated

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—The proposal to spend county funds to help widen Opdyke Road in front of the Pontiac football stadium appears headed for a resounding defeat Thursday (April 17) when the board of county commissioners will decide the controversial issue.

If the votes of commissioners on two separate committees and the random sampling of other commissioners are any indication, only a handful of commissioners are prepared to spend county funds in any amount on the stadium-related project.

Despite an indication that the county need contribute \$140,000 instead of the \$250,000 originally requested, few commissioners have budged from entrenched opposition to the request.

Some commissioners are talking of loaning rather than giving the road commission funds for the project. However, two of the three county road commissioners have said they would scrap the project before accepting a loan to make it possible.

SHORT OF a sweeping change of attitude or the sudden appearance of a new funding source, the Opdyke widening project appears doomed.

It was one of only three stadium-related road improvement plans for completion prior to the stadium's August opening. Opdyke, however, was the only road project calling for county funds.

Monday, the county finance committee became the second committee to urge the full board to reject the request for county funding. The vote was taken as a voice vote with none of the nine commissioners dissenting.

In March, commissioners on the planning and building committee also urged rejection, but by a 5-4 vote.

After these two negative votes, when several commissioners on finance talked of the possibility of loaning funds for the project, it was too much for at least one commissioner.

"Do we have to burn this request to get rid of it?" blurted Commissioner Henry Hoot (R-14) of Troy.

At another point in the finance committee meeting, Commissioner Bernard Lennon (D-18) of Ferndale, who

is also opposed to the request, mockingly set fire to his copy of the request as discussion persisted.

ACTUALLY, NOTHING as dramatic as burning should be necessary to kill the request, Thursday.

Of the 17 commissioners who have formally voted on the request in either of the two committees, 13 have opposed it.

Of the four commissioners who generally voted for the request on the planning and building committee, two have since become opponents: Patrick Nowak (R-25) of Farmington Hills and James Dunleavy (R-2) of Highland.

Commissioner Robert Page (R-13) of Birmingham, who had been undecided on the question, finally announced his opposition during the finance meeting.

Page became the sixth commissioner of the 13 from communities served by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers to oppose the request. Only Chairman Fred Houghten (R-4) of Rochester, John McDonald (R-37) of Farmington Hills and Joseph Montante (R-28) of Orchard Lake favor the request among this group.

THE ONLY vocal supporter of the request during Monday's discussion was Montante, who watched the meeting though he isn't a member of the finance committee.

"Sometimes commissioners can't see the forest for the trees," he said. "This stadium will be a shot in the arm to this county. It's the most fabulous thing. Even the Coliseum of Rome takes second seat to the Pontiac stadium."

The commissioners on the committee, however, were decidedly less enthusiastic. Taking turns, they blasted the proposal.

Commissioner Paul Kasper (R-23) of Bloomfield Hills said he couldn't support spending county funds on a project that wouldn't benefit the entire county. Approving such a request for the Pontiac area would open a "Pandora's Box" of similar requests from other areas with special projects in the future.

Kasper admitted, however, that the traffic situation around the stadium would be terrible.

"Half the players won't be able to get there when that first Lions game starts," he said.

COMMISSIONER HOOT said it shouldn't be the county board that is blamed for the traffic.

"The Pontiac Stadium Building Authority (PSBA) has the responsibility for roads that they haven't lived up to," Hoot said. "On opening day someone should print the names and telephone numbers of all those on the PSBA so the public will know who's to blame."

Commissioner Alexander Perinoff (D-21) of Southfield said the county was living up to its responsibilities through the \$500,000 already pledged by the county road commission.

Although Commissioner Page opposed giving funds, he joined others in considering a loan. Referring to the traffic expected, he said, "We can't just walk away from this thing."

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## Other roads need aid

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—The proposed widening of Opdyke Road in front of the Pontiac football stadium isn't the only stadium-related road improvement being considered and isn't the only one that involves public funds.

Two road improvements planned by the City of Pontiac have already received \$1.8 million in federal aid.

Both the widening of Featherstone Road, directly north of the stadium, and the extension of East Boulevard, which will allow direct access from Featherstone to Woodward Avenue, will be made possible through the U. S. government.

THE FEDERAL government has agreed to pay 72 per cent of both projects with urban aid highway funds provided by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

It will pay \$720,000 of the \$1 million Featherstone project and \$630,000 of the \$1.3 million East Boulevard project.

The City of Pontiac will pay a combined \$644,000 for both projects.

WORK ON Featherstone, already underway, will widen that street from two to five lanes. The East Boulevard project, scheduled to begin in June, would create a one-mile extension linking East Boulevard to the newly widened Featherstone.

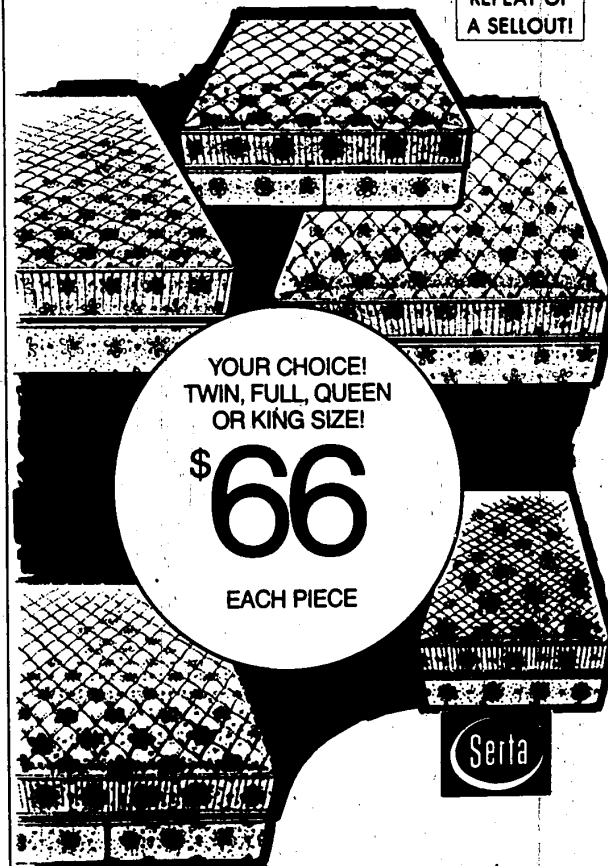
Like Opdyke Road, both Pontiac streets are considered major access routes to the stadium.

Apparently the Opdyke project could also have qualified for federal urban aid highway funds.

John Derrman, road commission spokesman, said road officials didn't submit the Opdyke project for consideration because other road projects were given higher priority.

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