



WIDER OPDYKE: BOON TO INDUSTRY, SPORTS FANS—Checking progress of road commission project to widen Opdyke road from present two to five lanes between Featherstone and Auburn roads are Dennis Grylchki, left, acting director of engineering, and Harold Rathfoot, construction engineer at Oakland Road Commission. All five lanes are scheduled to be open to traffic in mid-August. Project has been identified as urgent need since 1970, will benefit southeast industrial complex of nearby Pontiac as well as those attending events in Pontiac stadium, background.

Road board blasts transit funding

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10 percent in regional matching funds.

The governor proposes to raise the \$80 million in regional matching funds over a six-year period by charging passenger car owners in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties \$10 extra each year for license plates.

The statement of the road commissioners points out that the governor proposes to tax the class of citizens who will benefit least from public transit — the automobile owner.

And, though the transit system will serve a seven-county area, the road commissioners complain, only one class — car owners — in only three of the seven counties — will be required by the governor to pay all of the regional matching share of cost for the initial six-year phase.

The Oakland Board of Road Commissioners insists that all seven of the benefitting counties share the regional matching share of cost and that the regional financing base be greater than just automobile owners.

"This suggests," the road commissioners' statement says, "that the general funds of all of the seven counties be the source of regional matching funds."

The "people mover" for downtown Detroit also raised the hackles of the road commissioners.

"Foisting the cost of such a frill on people who have no earthly use for it is unconscionable," the road commissioners argued.

"If downtown Detroit businesses and the City of Detroit conclude that the cost of a people mover will help revive the central business district, then let them assume the entire local matching cost."

Governor Milliken has also proposed restructuring the board of governors of Southeastern Michigan Transit Authority (SEMTA), the transit operating agency.

"His proposal looks like an open invitation to the City of Detroit to dominate the policy body of the proposed transit system," the Oakland road commissioners charge. "The formula for appointments to the SEMTA board must guarantee against the possibility of domination by any one of the governmental entities represented."

The road commissioners were also critical of the governor's handling of road financing in his transit message to the legislature.

Noting that his transit proposals were detailed and specific,

the Oakland road policy board expressed disappointment at the vagueness of the governor's remarks about future road funds. He had pledged a study of that problem by the State Highway Commission.

"The prospect of a study is no substitute for specific funding commitments with respect to roads that are just as detailed as those for public transit," the road commissioners said. "If people are going to be depending on roads for their primary transportation needs as far ahead as we can see, we are going to have to look at the governor's hole card — and the legislature's — before throwing our wholehearted support behind public transit."

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"With very few exceptions, the road commission is not out to carve new road routes from the landscape. What we want, and what citizens have a right to expect, is to make present roads adequate — and to keep them that way." — Fred L. Harris, chairman, Board of Road Commissioners.

'Award-winning road commission'

Turn-around wins honor

The Oakland County Road Commission has won Oakland county its third national award in two years from the National Association of Counties (NACo).

Daniel T. Murphy, county executive, was advised by NACo in April that Oakland county is to receive a NACo New County Achievement award for the road commission's reorientation and revitalization that began in 1973 when the Board of County Road Commissioners arranged for a comprehensive management study of the road commission by Citizens Research Council of Michigan.

The county received two NACo awards last year — for the road commission's master right-of-way program and for the drain commission's program for harvesting weeds from lake bottoms.

The road commission's presentation that won the latest award is entitled "An Urban-County Road Commission Steps Up to the 'New County U. S. A.' Concept." It details the efforts of the Board of Road Commissioners and the road commission management to upgrade the agency's public

responsiveness, maximize results from available funding, and install a modern management system in line with NACo's objective of encouraging county government to deal competently with problems arising from urbanization.

"We must give substantial credit for the award to Citizens Research Council," said Fred L. Harris, chairman of the Board of Road Commissioners, "for their painstaking study that identified our problems and for specifying in 135 recommendations how we might overcome them."

One of the Research Council suggestions was to undertake a 10-year catch-up road improvement program in the county (see story, page one).

Since receiving the 135 recommendations last October, the Board of Road Commissioners has adopted and implemented a total of 34, according to William M. Richards, vice chairman, who was chairman of the body when the CRC study was first launched.

"We are proceeding to implement others of the recommendations as quickly as conditions permit," Richards said, "so our public can enjoy the substantial benefits of this study."



HARRIS



RICHARDS

They make road policy

Fred L. Harris, Southfield attorney and four-year veteran of Board of County Road Commissioners, was elected chairman of the policy body for 1975. William M. Richards, Royal Oak businessman and chairman of the road panel in 1973-4, became vice chairman of the panel. John R. Goss, Jr., business executive and former Bloomfield township trustee, was named to six-year term as a road commissioner in January.



GNAU