

Will widen to six lanes

Eight-lane Telegraph squelched

By ALICE COLLINS

Telegraph Road will be widened to six lanes from Twelve Mile Road in Southfield to Orchard Lake Road in Bloomfield Township instead of eight as previously planned, according to an announcement made last week by the Department of State Highways and Transportation.

Bingham Farms and Franklin, the residential villages that border the

Twelve and One Half to Fourteen Mile Road stretch, have been fighting the eight-lane proposal, because of the expected noise level and environmental impact it would have on their community. Homeowner groups in Southfield and Bloomfield Township have also objected to the eight-lane expansion of the highway.

Maurice Rohlslein, an engineer in design with the highway department, said the decision followed a meeting of department management and representatives of the communities involved. Many factors were taken into account, said Rohlslein, including population projections.

WHILE OFFICIALS and residents in Franklin and Bingham Farms praised the decision to reduce width of the highway, Bloomfield Township Police Chief Robert Snell said he is "very disappointed" to see a reduction in the original design.

"If the reduction to six lanes, though still an improvement, will prove to be inadequate and we'll see life lost because of it."

The new plans call for construction of six lanes in each direction for a total of 12 miles. Two intersections along the full 10 mile stretch have already been widened to eight lanes.

In announcing the change, Deputy Director of Highways Gerald J. McCarthy said the road will be constructed so that two additional lanes could be added at a future date if traffic demands.

A spokesman for the highway department said Northwestern Highway, and whether or not it is extended through northwestern Oakland County, may play a part in future plans for Telegraph.

Telegraph widening plans are being redesigned without the outside lanes and work on the highway is expected to begin later this year.

A 60 FOOT median will separate the traffic and the space the outside lanes would have occupied will be left as shoulder and drainage area.

Construction is now expected to cost \$11.75 million, a reduction of \$1.25 million from the projected \$13 million for the eight lanes.

Bingham Farms Councilman Robert Zimmermann, who led the fight for his village, said he's convinced that the highway department decided on the lane reduction following a meeting in Lansing on Dec. 23 attended by representatives of the governor's office, highway department management, Zimmermann and Joe Benson of Bingham Farms and Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy.

"MURPHY WAS the one who changed their minds," said Zimmermann. "He had the knowledge, the facts and the ability to persuade them (highway department)."

Also active in the campaign to get the highway department to "present alternatives" to the original plan was County Commissioner Lillian Moffitt.

"The six lane plan is a good alternative," said Mrs. Moffitt. "It will minimize the problems that the people in Franklin and Bingham Farms and Farmcroft (Bloomfield Township subdivision) will face."

Zimmermann said "having made the effort and conducted the letter campaign, I'm very pleased I'm sure the people of Bingham Farms and Franklin will be pleased as well as the rest of the people up and down the road."

FRANKLIN VILLAGE President Ward Thomas said it was "very gratifying to know that the state officials listen and respect the opinions of the people in our concerned communities."

Bloomfield Township Clerk Deloris Little said she was "a little shocked and disappointed that the highway department and the county didn't contact the township or our police department" before changing the plans.

"With the traffic we have now, I

can't foresee them making do with six lanes. It's not that I'm for or against eight lanes, but if eight were not needed, why were they planned?"

"Rather than get tied up in a court case," continued Mrs. Little. "I'm sure they took the line of least resistance."

Township Treasurer Fred Korson said: "In all the hearings they needed eight lanes and now suddenly they don't need eight lanes. It's the same old credibility gap problem."

IN A LETTER announcing the change to County Executive Murphy, the highway department said that "although the projected traffic volume for 1977 does not fully warrant eight lanes, other considerations such as driver comfort, continuity of the basic language, a balanced system, and increased safety..." were used in arriving at the eight-lane decision.

"However," the letter continues, "we are willing to construct six lanes at this time. Perhaps in a few years, after a more definite transportation pattern is established and the economic conditions become stabilized, our continued surveillance of the situation will dictate a review of this decision."

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