

editorial opinion

Northwestern decision should not be stamped

State Highway Commission Chairman Peter Fletcher was right: The M-275 and Northwestern Highway issues are complex, complicated, confusing. Members of the highway commission are acting carefully, not letting themselves be stamped.

The commission last week made it clear it will not back down on its decision to cancel the M-275 project in western Oakland County, despite pressure from legislators and a spokesman for J.L. Hudson.

The commission made it equally clear it will consider alternatives to M-275; it doesn't seem to be buying the no-growth syndrome of those who want to exclude "outsiders."

The commission, despite a recommendation from its staff, did not act precipitously and automatically reject the related extension of Northwestern Highway beyond Orchard Lake Road.

CIRCLE APRIL 27 on your calendar and leave space to fill in the time and place. That's the day the four-man highway commission will come to Oakland County to hear the road projects discussed by local folks.

The decision to move its meeting to Oakland will save all an hour-plus trip to Lansing.

In listening to alternative plans to M-275, the highway commission recognizes merely saying "no" to a freeway doesn't solve the problem. Between Telegraph and US-23, there simply isn't a good north-south route to penetrate the interior of the county. People need to get to jobs in Southfield, Detroit and other commercial and industrial

centers. They will want to shop at regional shopping centers as well as the corner store.

It is childishly simple to say Oakland County should "improve local roads." For if M-275 would have a heavy environmental impact, so will improved local roads.

And so we enter a tougher, more detailed phase of the transportation controversy. Persons who want to form a mob and shout that they're "fer it" or "agin' it" should stay home. Serious students of public policy will be addressing the question: What do we build in place of M-275?

IF M-275 ISN'T to be built, it by no means follows that Northwestern's extension should be cancelled.

The City of Southfield points out that dumping Northwestern onto little Orchard Lake Road causes serious rush-hour traffic back-ups that are hazardous to life and property.

It is shallow and terribly unfair to characterize proponents of the Northwestern extension as "commercial interests" and reject their worries as if they were leeches. For four decades, officials and landholders in West Bloomfield Township have been following the laws, the plans and the rules and planning both public and private investments in the Northwestern corridor.

The environmental argument has been made. It will not be enough to repeat it endlessly on April 27. If local people don't want Northwestern extended, they must be prepared to suggest alternatives.

Those four men on the highway commission are sharp, and they won't be stamped.

from our readers

Reader defends TV journalists

Editor:
This is in response to the article in the Feb. 10 issue of the Observer & Eccentric, "Why we groan." The subject was a news conference about public transportation, with SEMTA General Manager Larry Salei and Chairman Tom Turner speaking.

You stated "Channel 7's entertainer waltzed in midway through the session."

"Entertainer?" Yes, television news people will be the first to admit there is a degree of entertainment involved in news reporting. After all, viewers

want to be entertained. The Nielsen ratings are watched fervently by television executives. As the wife of a TV news cameraman, I have heard all of this from television people themselves.

AS A REPORTER yourself, you must be aware that there are times when a reporter must rush from one story to another with barely time to breathe in between.

A day in the life of a reporter is often extremely hectic. Are you aware of the travel time, hurrying

and complicated coordination efforts involved in reporting one day's news in the large Detroit metropolitan area for television?

The reporter you blasted may have rushed to the meeting from another story. If the TV news department had thought of it as trivial matter, they wouldn't have bothered to send anyone.

I quote you again, "... television entertainers who purport to be newspaperpersons." Really now, Mr. Newspaperman, I should think it beneath you to attack another reporter in such a personally derogatory manner.

Do I detect just a touch of professional jealousy toward television reporters? Do you really believe they "waltz" and "chirp" through their stories? They may do that when they're on the air but not when they're on the road; dirty, exhausted and often hungry.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM is good; it helps in maintaining one's balance. But be fair. Your main point is that it was discourteous of the reporter to intrude upon the proceedings and ask for an on-the-spot synopsis of what had already been said. That's understandable, this all too well and theirs is a highly-competitive business. So, the next time you feel a sneer or groan coming on, put this in your reporter's notebook—TV reporters don't make a daily practice of arriving late and unprepared at news conferences. A good reporter's goal is to get in there, get the story and report it. Sometimes at the cost of personal humiliation.

DEBORAH BAKER
Canton Township

Reader supports capital punishment

Editor:

In no way can I agree with your editorial "Capital Punishment is Bunk." I served in Korea and I know what it is like to see people die—it is not a pleasant sight.

I have enclosed a recent article where someone robbed and executed, in cold blood, four innocent people. Do you honestly think it is right to allow this individual to roam the streets again?

I am not naive enough to think that capital punishment is a deterrent against future crimes. However, it is the best way to take mad dogs off the streets and protect society from them. The people who commit these crimes don't deserve to be treated like humans. They should be treated for what they are, mad dogs, and eliminated just like we eliminate a mad dog.

It is actually more humane to execute them than it is to put them behind bars for the rest of their lives.

G.R. MAYREND
Farmington

Reader appreciates Phil Hart article

Editor:
Thank you so very much for your kind article which did capture the spirit of Senator Hart that I have known. This man did help the hungry, the handicapped and the troubled who they turned to him. But his humble spirit seems to want to reach out to those who he knew lived hidden from the ability to know he was there and away from the view of America's affluent.

He seemed to know that Americans

do care when they see little children and adults maimed by hunger and deprivation, but could not understand any excuse for not moving to eradicate these injustices.

Wouldn't a true tribute to this very honorable man be to see that the employable are employed, and that a national health bill, food and decent housing and equal education are no longer espoused but are reality.

MARY ANN POLLOCK
Farmington Hills

Only 2 options open

Editor:
Tim Richard has done an excellent job of analyzing the relative cost and service impact on Detroit suburbs of the tri-county regional transit concept developed by the Wayne and Oakland County Road Commissions, as compared with the heavy-rail plan favored by Mayor Coleman Young of Detroit.

May I take this opportunity to underscore the importance to your readers of informing themselves thoroughly and taking an active role in shaping the ultimate decisions as to which type of transit system will be built?

That decision will be made by Southwestern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA), as things now stand, subject in some degree to decisions that will be forthcoming from the federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), Governor Milliken and the Michigan legislature—and possibly by county and local government units in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. All these critical contributors to the final decision are political and hence responsive to overwhelming public opinion—except SEMTA.

There are only two options open. Largely because of the energy crisis, we no longer have the option of doing nothing about public transit. So we are left to choose between two regional transit concepts—heavy rail or light rail.

Heavy rail transit as visualized by SEMTA and favored by Mayor Young, would amount to transporting overkill in Detroit. The heavy rail concept would cost a total of nearly \$6

billion just to build, to say nothing of annual operating subsidies of awesome proportions. And, although most of the benefits of the heavy rail system would be within Detroit, residents of Oakland and Macomb counties and outcounty Wayne would be taxed on the same basis as Detroit residents to pay the local share of construction costs and operating subsidies.

The light rail concept developed by the road commissions would, on the other hand, adequately and equitably meet transportation requirements in every portion of the three counties—at a fraction of the cost. By using existing railroad rights of way and surface lines, the light rail system with the bus system could be built and in full operation within three to four years at a cost of \$82.7 million—less than one-eighth of the construction cost for the heavy rail system alone. If the people of the tri-county region are looking for a reasonably priced transit system that is adequate and equitable in distribution of its services, the light rail concept developed by the road commissions is an answer.

We were asked to (1) develop a practical and affordable alternative to the heavy rail plan, and (2) recommend an alternative organization to SEMTA as the planning, policy, and operating body for a southeast Michigan transit system. The request was made last August by none other than James Kellogg, who was Gov. Milliken's transportation advisor.

JOHN B. GNAU JR., chairman
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of Oakland County

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The Third Man

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The third man is the Weights and Measures Official who checks all weighing and volume measuring devices used in sales made to the public. This 'third man' is always present in spirit, protecting both buyer and seller. He is a dedicated man working quietly and tirelessly to save customers money . . . and to safeguard vendors' businesses. Errors in either direction, over or under, will cause someone to suffer.

The Public and merchants look upon him as a friend. Because of this friendship, everyone wholeheartedly joins in celebrating National Weights and Measures Week March 1 thru 7. This one week that the 'third man' drops his anonymity and steps into the spotlight of appreciation for the job he does in behalf of the public and merchants. After all, what he stands for is just 'good business'.



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