

Freeway's Bustin' Up Homes

How Some Homeowners Balked; How Government Can Help Them When Surface Construction Begins

By DENNIS PAJOT

Except for a zig to avoid taking public school property at Thurston and a zag to avoid most of the same at Schoolcraft Community College, the new Jeffries Freeway is going to "run right through the middle of a lot of houses" in Redford Township, Livonia and Farmington Township.

Fortunately, those houses, on the present Schoolcraft boulevard and Haggerty Road, are being purchased by the State Highway Department, and their owners will be reimbursed.

Many of the homeowners aren't going to get as much for their property as they think it's worth.

Only about 5% of the right-of-way remains to be negotiated, according to department spokesmen.

The department has begun condemnation proceedings on another 15%.

The remainder has been purchased, and boarded up windows and doors testify to the impending demise of dozens of homes in the near future.

A POIGNANT SIGN lettered on the window of a gas station at Inkster Road tells the fate of businesses similarly in the route:

"Follow us ... We will be moving to Five Mile and Merriman," it says. The sign has been there some time. The building is already empty.

Another service station in the Jeffries route at Merriman is slated to fall and already has a new, contemporary design replacement up and ready to go into business a few hundred feet further back.

At Minock Circle in Redford Township, a contrast is presented. A simple frame house is boarded up, ready to be moved or demolished. A neighboring house appears to be unaffected.

Looks are deceiving. The occupants are presently undergoing condemnation proceedings. They feel their property is worth 20% more than the Highway Department offered.

The home is made of brick with a brick garage connected by a covered breezeway. Formal evergreen shrubs and trees make it picturesque even in the waning days of winter.

MRS. STANLEY BANKETT, owner, sadly shows color pictures of what it will look like in the spring on the three-acre homestead. In the 29 years her family has lived there, they've cultivated numerous lush flower gardens. All that is lacking of every girl's dream home setting is the white picket fence.

"We know we'll have to sell. We just hope we can get the going value for it," said Mrs. Bankett.

In Livonia Ed and Edna Voss will lose their home of 18 years after just three years of his retirement. He's bitter. He believes his

property is worth \$35,000 and was offered \$18,000.

Everett and Margaret Hatfield are losing a barber shop and beauty salon. He was offered \$43,900 and told "accept or we'll condemn." He summoned a lawyer. It would cost \$80,000 to duplicate the shops today, Hatfield says. He's very mindful of the years it took him to build up a trade, too.

William and Genevieve Haavisto were offered \$26,000 for the home they've just rescued from mortgage. Two appraisers value it at \$60,000.

FEDERAL AID IS available for persons displaced by the I-696 freeway.

Long-term homeowners who occupied houses in the expressway's path at least one year before the state's first written offer to purchase are eligible for a supplemental housing payment.

A supplemental rental payment is available for either tenants or occupants who were living in the area at least 90 days before the first written order to purchase. They must occupy suitable housing within one year of their move.

Displaced residents who elected the flat rate room moving allowance are also entitled to a relocation allowance.

The State Highway Department reports it expects \$6 million worth of claims for relocation assistance this year.

As before, owners of residential properties receive payment for actual expenses of moving household goods and the market value of their properties.

In addition, they now may collect up to \$5,000 in "additive payments," if necessary, to purchase similar housing which meets the "decent, safe and sanitary requirements of the federal law."

Renters may receive moving costs plus a lump sum, if required, for safe, sanitary housing. The payment is intended to cover a rent increase over a two-year period, but cannot exceed \$1,500.

OCCUPANTS OF COMMERCIAL properties may receive payment of up to \$25,000 to cover the expense of moving personal property.

Right-of-way buyers advise owners and occupants of available relocation assistance and financial benefits at the outset of negotiations.

After acquisition, when the occupants have moved, payments are processed through the office of Ray Wardwell, additive payments supervisor for the State Highway Department, for approval by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads.

When construction begins, also, contractors are required to carry property and liability insurance.

Homeowners adjacent to the freeway may have their residences inspected before

construction begins to speed up any damage claims after the freeway is completed.

Homeowners may write to the Michigan Department of State Highways at 18101 W. Nine Mile, Southfield, requesting the inspection.

All complaints should be directed to John Carroll, resident engineer in charge of work in Observerland.

"We will make every attempt to keep nuisances down to a minimum and help in any way we can," a department spokesman told Observer Newspapers.

Traffic will be maintained on Schoolcraft and all main streets in both directions during the construction. Side streets will be reviewed with the local municipality to decide routes of construction transport.

The only real problem the department expects is on north and south streets where temporary roads and cross-overs for turning will be built around construction.

Noise and dust controls are planned to safeguard the interests of area residents.

Construction crews will work 24 hours a day only if their work doesn't create a disturbance—such as the tunnel work now being done.

Burning of debris is also subject of planned controls.

THE STATE IS READY to let surface construction contracts this spring and summer. Underground construction of a storm sewer has been in progress and will continue throughout this year.

This month the department is scheduled to let the contract for the road bed from present construction in Detroit to Telegraph road in Redford Township.

The Telegraph to Beech Daly contract letting is slated for May 20, as is the contract

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Stories And Pictures
By Dennis L. Pajot



HERE'S HOW TO RESCUE A HOUSE

What It's Like Lower Down

I'm under 50 feet of Observerland soil in this story. The route of the new Jeffries (I-96) Freeway is directly overhead.

I've decided to find out what it's like down here where they're putting in a storm sewer, the first actual construction work for the new east-west. Detroit-to-points east, north and south superhighway.

Hank, the foreman on this tunnel-boring job, is right beside me. I'm wearing his hard hat. He borrowed someone else's.

IT'S WARMER DOWN here than I thought it would be; a little damp but not chilly. Of course, the 13-foot shaft to the surface is just over there about 50 feet, beyond those four miniature railroad cars.

A drilling rig is spinning out a 10-foot bore at about a foot every five minutes.

A conveyor belt over my head is running clay mud from the drill to those cars.

Bill, the pilot of the drill, didn't really want to pose — he didn't have much room up front, but he positioned himself well for a couple of pictures.

The guy on the driver's seat behind him couldn't move much.

Ahead of them, a huge circular wheel that resembles a lazy susan tipped on its edge is revolving, chewing out the earth.

Pretty nifty.

SOMETHING ELSE nifty is the use of a laser beam as a "navigator."

I can't photograph it with my equipment, but they use it to keep a straight track. It's a red streak to the eye. The drill pilot keeps a ball pinpointed on the beam for his track and keeps it centered on a target for his depth.



DOWN UNDER — This view is 50 feet down and more than 50 feet into a storm sewer tunnel being dug for the Jeffries Freeway. At the rear a saucer shaped drill face is boring a 10-foot cut. Dirt is being conveyed toward the camera to boxcars behind the photographer. (Observer photo)

Since a laser beam won't bend for anything, when that drill finally breaks into the next shaft a half a block from ours, they should be right on the bulls-eye.

Hope I didn't distract them.

THIS TUNNEL WILL carry 300 cubic feet per second runoff of surface water from the new freeway.

Eight-foot-long and eight-foot-diameter sections of "pipe" are being shoved into this tunnel by this crew. Every eight carloads of that dirt makes way for a section.

Those sections weigh 19,000 pounds each! They're reinforced concrete. The crane up there really chugs to lift and lower one down that shaft.

NEVER BEEN DOWN this far in a fresh tunnel before. Oh, they've got a couple of sections of pipe in at the mouth, but mostly it's just mother nature's laws of force and us back here. The men don't seem to mind.

"We get good pay," Hank says. Hank's the son of a Pennsylvania coal miner. Tried office jobs after a hitch in the Air Force. Couldn't stand the monotony. He's back in the mines.

Another guy working on the shaft crew said he can't read my story.

"If I could, I wouldn't be down here," he quipped.

To pushing some empty cars into the tunnel, he said out. "Here we go! Here we go! Here we go!"

The fellows in the path of those cars undoubtedly appreciated the signal. From the shaft behind, three others took up the chorus gleefully. "Here we goooooo!"

It was time for me to retreat.

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(Last day Saturday, March 28)

11 a.m. and 12 p.m. - Ballet
1 p.m. - Puppet Shows
2 p.m. - Baton Twirling
2:30 p.m. - Fencing
3 p.m. - Guitar
4 p.m. - Guitar
7 p.m. - Dog Obedience
8 p.m. - Ballroom Dancing

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