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Bad roads will cost millions of \$\$ to repair

By Steve Barnaby
editor

While Farmington Hills commuters find area roads crumbling and overcrowded, city officials are hunting for the money to repair and expand them.

But a decline in state gas and weight taxes, which pays for repairs, has left many projects wanting.

With a preliminary list of 14 projects costing an estimated \$5 million in hand, administration officials urged

City Council to map out a plan of action to deal with the problem.

Growing population adds to the money woes, according to a report presented to city leaders.

"Many of our two-lane and three-lane highways are over capacity, creating lengthy backups of traffic, especially at the peak hours of the day," said the report, presented by City Manager Larry Savage.

He urged the expansion of two-lane roads so they're capable of handling left-hand turns and, in turn, reduce

traffic congestion.

UNPAVED ROADS also attracted his attention.

"We must also review our major gravel roads to see what developments may occur in the future and provide pavement in these gravel sections that will handle both existing and future traffic volume," says the report.

Recent paving and resurfacing of local roads have reduced maintenance costs, says Savage. But those programs were financed with 20 percent of the

cost being picked up by city funds.

"Unfortunately, as the need for these improvements has increased, our ability to finance them has been decreasing," says the report.

"The primary source of revenue has been shrinking in relation to the reduced gasoline consumption."

Increased material costs, combined with budget constraints in the state Highway Department and Oakland County Road Commission, have added to the burden of local municipalities to maintain roads, said the report.

Following are a list of projects outlined by city administration. Some have estimated cost. Others have yet to be tallied.

• **ORCHARD LAKE ROAD** between 12 Mile and Grand River — This section of roadway originally was included in the Oakland County Road Commission's construction program. Because of the current budget constraints, this project has been removed from the immediate priority list. Estimated cost: \$787,000.

• **12 MILE ROAD CORRIDOR** — There currently is an inter-city task force studying the congestion and improvements required to accommodate the growing traffic on this major thoroughfare. Although the master land use plan has determined a boulevard section for the westerly portion of this roadway through the city, no plan has been prepared for its implementation. City officials have recommended continued study by the task force. No cost

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Crime victims will benefit with new laws

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

The recent passage of stricter drunk driving laws by the Michigan Legislature indicates that Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), could prove to be a vanguard for other victim interest groups, according to Farmington Public Safety Director Robert Siefert.

The reform package toughens penalties for drunk drivers and makes it easier for police to arrest motorists suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol.

Formed only seven months ago in Michigan, the California-based MADD organization has exerted intense pressure on the Legislature and the judicial system in its efforts to curb highway carnage due to drunk driving.

MADD'S LEGISLATIVE victory "represents the interests of victims, who in our system have been forgotten," said Siefert, member of a statewide drunk driving task force that urges passage of the laws.

"The system has to be more responsive to victims, and not only in drunk driving concerns."

concept in the United States, Siefert said.

(Federal legislation passed Friday — after Siefert was interviewed by the Observer — addresses for the first time the victims of crime. It mandates that before sentencing, judges obtain an "impact statement" describing what the crime did to the victim and/or the victim's survivors.)

THE PASSAGE OF THE MADD-backed laws also is impressive in light of those who comprise the group, he said. Often, members become emotionally involved in the issue after losing a loved one in a drunk driving accident — a factor many predicted would decrease MADD's effectiveness and credibility. But professionalism has characterized the group's activities since its inception in Michigan.

Among the provisions of the three measure reform package, which takes effect April 1, 1983:

• Driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.10 or higher — currently considered "a presumption of drunkenness" — will be an automatic violation of state law.

• Licenses of repeat offenders may be suspended for up to five years — an

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Mums the word

Charles Mishaks prunes some of his brightly colored mums growing along the driveway in front of his home. Mishaks will play a leading role in the annual meeting and show of the National

Chrysanthemum Society Inc. this weekend at the Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield. It's Michigan's second national show. At least 5,000 people are expected to view the blooms.

MINDY BAUNDERS/Staff photographer

Hills founding father honored as First Citizen

By Steve Barnaby
editor

Business and civic leaders turned out to honor one of Farmington Hills' most distinguished political leaders at the annual Chamber of Commerce dinner last week.

Robert McConnell, who spearheaded the drive for cityhood 10 years ago,

was named Citizen of the Year by the local business organization. More than 150 persons turned out to see Farmington Hills' first mayor receive his due.

In what seemed an appropriate pairing, McConnell shared the Chamber dinner spotlight with nationally-known economist Paul McCracken. The University of Michigan professor was the

evening's speaker (See accompanying story).

While McCracken has distinguished himself economically on a national scale, McConnell has done the same on a local level.

It was for those economic accomplishments that he was honored at the Botsford Inn last Thursday. Since 1974 the Irish-born businessman has been the

chairman of the Farmington Hills Industrial and Economic Development Commission. During his tenure several large industrial corporations have come to Farmington Hills. Among them are Manufacturers Hanover and Texas Instruments.

MOST PERSONS credit McConnell with luring those and many other corporations to the city.

In accepting the honor, McConnell gave credit to others in the community for the city's economic growth.

"It's nothing that I've personally done, but it has been those who have worked worked with me," he told the audience.

"Much of the credit goes to the foresight of the early township fathers who put us in an enviable economic position," he said.

Beginning in the 1960s, McConnell and a group of other residents launched a campaign to dump township government and change to cityhood. At one time consideration was given to merging the township with the city of Farmington. But that move failed by a slim electoral margin.

In 1972 a charter commission was elected and McConnell was named its chairman. He also served as the township's last supervisor — a job he hoped would be eliminated.

After a stormy year of wrangling over various aspects of the proposed time between his family, splitting his time between his business and the city's business. Besides serving as mayor and city councilman, McConnell was elected as an Oakland County commissioner in 1976. He resigned in 1979 to pursue his business interests.

McConnell was nominated by Botsford Inn owner John Anhut, who served with him on the Industrial and Economic Development Commission.

"We are constantly praised by applicants for the efficiency and good demeanor of our board," said Anhut in his nominating petition.

"Our chairman is principally respon-



RANDY BORSST/Staff photographer

Irish-born Robert McConnell took a bow Thursday after being named Citizen of the Year.

able in that he has such a thorough knowledge of our area and is so dedicated to seeing that Farmington Hills survives," he said.

A graduate of the Belfast College of Technology and Queens College, he received his master's degree in business from Wayne State University.

McCracken cautiously optimistic

Past holds key to economy

By Steve Barnaby
editor

If you're looking for future economic recovery, seek out the lessons of history as your guide.

That's the advice that economist

Paul McCracken left with the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce during its annual dinner.

More than 150 business and civic leaders gathered in the Botsford Inn Carriage House Thursday to listen to the University of Michigan professor

give his predictions on the future of this country's economy.

He looked at both short- and long-range economic history to present his argument for recovery.

Cautiously optimistic, McCracken noted that in the last month, economic indicators showed the country was fighting the ravages of inflation and high interest rates.

"IF THIS isn't the beginning of the end, it is the end of the beginning," said McCracken. The professor is a member of the Economic Policy Advisory Board formed by President Ronald Reagan when he took office.

Indicators to watch for up and down swings, said McCracken, are inflation, unemployment and the performance in real income gains.

"If I would have attended this meeting a month ago, I would have been hardpressed to cite anything upbeat. But within the last month, there has been some empirical evidence that the bend we wanted to start up again may be coming."

Among those positive indicators is a change in consumer sentiment, said McCracken, referring to the recent increases in stock market action. This, he said, correlates with the fate of the automobile industry.

"We're all familiar with a durable

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RANDY BORSST/Staff photographer

Renowned economist Paul McCracken sees the beginning of the end of a long-awaited economic recovery. McCracken addressed the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce at its annual meeting

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