

Road panel offers new 5-year plan

By Tim Richard
staff writer

An expanded five-year "tri-party" road improvement program is being proposed by the three-member Oakland County Road Commission (OCRC).
"The past success is the best justification for its continuation," OCRC Chairman John Gnuu Jr. of West Bloomfield told the 27-member Board of Commissioners last week.
Gnuu proposed a total program of \$2.25 million a year, from 1986 through 1990. In the first five-year program (1980-84), the program amounted to \$2.5 million for the full five years.
The OCRC proposed that the money be split evenly between townships and municipalities (cities and villages). Funds could be used only on county roads in each jurisdiction, not on local streets or state highways.

THE COUNTY Board of Commissioners was

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asked to appropriate \$750,000 a year from the general fund, local units a total of another \$750,000 and the OCRC \$750,000 from its state gasoline and weight tax revenues.
That would be 80 percent more than the average \$415,000 the county has spent annually so far.
The county board, wrestling with prison site and Walnut Lake pollution problems, had no immediate reaction to Gnuu's proposal. But commissioners have approved tri-party programs totaling \$5.4 million since 1973. Thus, some kind of agreement appears likely.
OCRC proposed the plan when it became apparent its own revenues would be insufficient to carry out all the road improvements demanded by the auto-dependent and highly decentralized county.

IN THE 1980-84 five-year program, Gnuu said, \$1.5 million was spent to upgrade roads near the Pontiac Silverdome in anticipation of the 1982 Super Bowl football game.
"The remaining \$1 million were earmarked for improvements to county roads, with \$250,000 to be spent each year during the four-year period 1981-84."

The tri-party programs of the '80s "concentrated on highway safety above all other objectives." These improvements included passing lanes, slight distance improvements, school zone flashers and intersection improvements.
Townships particularly liked gravel improvements on rural roads, Gnuu said. Besides the Silverdome-related projects, Oakland's economic development was enhanced by improvements on 14 Mile Road at the Oakland Mall.
"The communities are involved in the decisions regarding where and how monies are to be spent," Gnuu pointed out.

What's in it for your town?

Here is how the OCRC's formula would apply to Observer & Eccentric-area communities, with communities expected to budget one-third the listed dollar figures over a five-year period:
• Townships — Bloomfield, \$137,012; Oakland, \$38,225; West Bloomfield, \$146,837.
• Cities — Birmingham, \$12,825; Bloomfield

Hills, \$14,475; Farmington, \$15,413; Farmington Hills, \$132,975; Lathrup Village, \$17,100; Orchard Lake, \$17,887; Rochester, \$5,850; Rochester Hills, \$187,950; Southfield, \$141,076; Troy, \$174,375.
• Villages — Beverly Hills, \$15,413; Bingham Farms, \$4,500; Franklin, \$11,925.

THE ROAD Commission proposed continued use of two formulas for allocating funds:

- Townships — average annual number of accidents on all county roads, the 1980 township population, and the county road mileage within each township.
- Cities and villages — county road miles and average number of accidents on county roads. "A population factor is not included in the city and

village formula because it would skew the distribution dramatically," the OCRC said.

A five-year plan was proposed because the Road Commission found that when it tried a one-year plan, many communities were unable to provide matching funds because their budgets already had been prepared. A long-term program allows better planning, the OCRC said.

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