

Opinion

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Hold reaction to road plans

TAKE YOUR pick — Northwest Highway, 14 Mile Road, Orchard Lake Road, 12 Mile Road, Haggerty Road.

Nightmarish traffic congestion during peak travel times along these main arteries represents the single greatest threat to the quality of life Farmington Hills residents now enjoy.

Although not a popular discussion topic, bumper-to-bumper, stop-and-go traffic traditionally associated with rush hour now often extends far beyond 7-9 a.m. and 4-6 p.m.

Nobody wants to live in a \$100,000-plus home abutting a parking lot-like thoroughfare where speeds of 10 to 15 miles per hour are increasingly becoming the norm rather than the exception.

Just ask Gov. James Blanchard.

Flanked by state Sen. Richard Fessler (R-West Bloomfield) and state transportation honcho James Pitz, Blanchard took a helicopter tour of the Haggerty Road corridor from M-59 in Commerce Township to I-696 in Farmington Hills July 28.

And the governor got a bird's-eye view of motorists poking along a country road traversing one of southeast Michigan's hottest real estate markets.

WEST BLOOMFIELD Supervisor John Doherty predicts industrial parks along Haggerty will generate 20,000 vehicle trips per day, office and retail development 19,000 vehicle trips per day and private residences 4,300 vehicle trips per day. If that prediction holds, traffic along the major north-south artery could well become a gridlock.

Solving one problem but compounding another is that an interchange is slated to be added to I-696 at Haggerty to ease the crush at Orchard Lake Road.

The new interchange will make Haggerty a feeder road for the freeway. And that's sure to snarl traffic along Haggerty to the point where even motorists lost in the sounds of their four-speaker stereos will begin to lose their patience.

Equally foreboding is that the next decade is expected to bring 60,000 new jobs to Southfield, Novi and Farmington Hills. It doesn't take a cartographer to realize Haggerty sits smack in the middle of this real estate hotbed.

Following his eye-opening chopper ride, the governor — taking full advantage of the pre-primary audience of officials from the townships of West Bloomfield, Commerce and Highland, the cities of Farmington Hills, Novi and

Walled Lake and, of course, the press — pledged to widen Haggerty into a parkway within three years.

"THERE IS no question in my mind that something has to be done as soon as possible," Blanchard said in fine campaign style.

But his assessment is something that western Oakland County residents and merchants already know all too intimately.

So it wasn't surprising when Concerned Citizens for West Bloomfield questioned whether talk of improving Haggerty was really a ploy to gain support for extending I-275 northward — an idea shelved years ago after an environmental impact study.

Blanchard quickly squelched that belief. And, in true election-year form, he promised a Haggerty Road improvement plan, with cost estimates and funding prospects, within 30 days. Strangely, campaign promises often go the way of the political scrap heap. But we'll give Blanchard the benefit of the doubt unless time proves otherwise.

Blanchard, who rose to the state's top executive position from a congressional seat in Pleasant Ridge, deserves credit for recognizing that Oakland County's economic boom has caused road woes far worse than what local taxpayers should have to address alone.

And he struck an upbeat chord when he declared that deplorable road conditions that threaten a community's safety and quality of life transcend party politics.

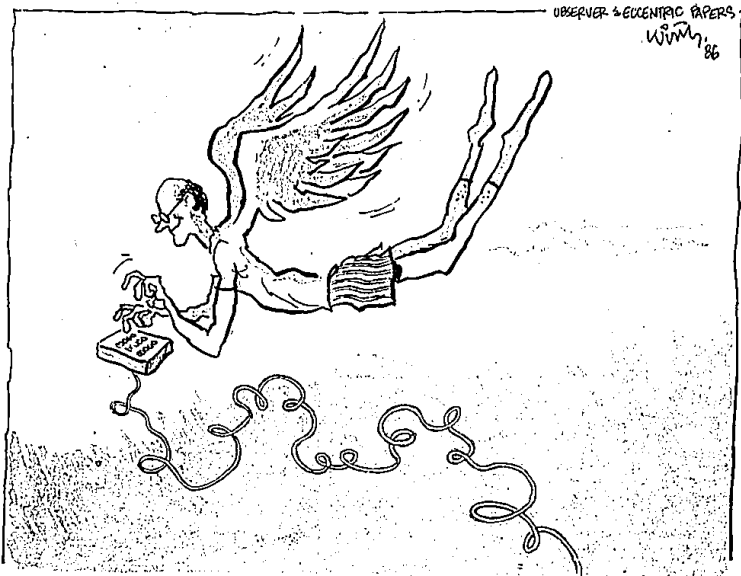
WHAT'S MORE, Blanchard perceptively pointed out that if the five-million square feet of new office space in Southfield and Farmington Hills — and the resulting 15,000 new jobs — aren't effectively managed, the area will sink from the weight of its own financial success.

But don't go thinking relief just yet for Haggerty Road.

Although Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Novi clearly stand to benefit from Blanchard's plan, there's justified concern about the bottleneck that could occur in Commerce Township where the planned parkway ends and Haggerty's two-lane corridor continues.

The plan may provide some overdue relief. But only time will tell to what extent the governor's good intentions notwithstanding.

— Bob Sklar



Plugged into the future

AS 1984 dawned, they brought author Alvin ("Future Shock") Toffler to Schoolcraft College to talk about the future, which is where most of us will spend the remainder of our lives.

Toffler said the world of 1984 didn't turn out the way George Orwell had predicted in 1948, with massive cities, three supercountries and anti-like people scurrying to monumental work places.

He said many of us would work flexible shifts, work at home and transmit our work to an office by telephone.

Sure, Al, sure, I snickered to myself. Heh, heh, heh.

TWO YEARS LATER I'm doing it. The electronic umbilical cord linking me to the mother office is a Tandy 200 portable computer.

The sports guys began using them first. They could go to a tournament game on a Saturday night, write some of the action stuff while the game was in progress, interview the coach for a reaction and transmit it in minutes.

I take one to the State Capitol when I cover our local heroes in the Legislature. This writing machine is 12 inches long, nine wide and two inches deep, plus two cups which slip over a standard telephone mouthpiece and earpiece.



Tim Richard

With those measurements, you can see, it fits into a briefcase with room left over for my social services file, a lunch and a notepad. Talk about mobility.

And as Alvin Toffler predicted, I also can write at home from the comfort of my maple desk, my early American chair and my underwear. No dress code here in the den.

I LEARNED this business on daily papers, where I covered more than one industrial strike by phoning in a story to the city desk.

That system requires 1) a reporter who can mentally see a paragraph and dictate it, 2) a rewrite person who is compatible and can slip in necessary background without asking a lot of fool delaying questions and 3) a fast Linotype operator to get the story into type.

I covered the 1968 Republican convention from Miami Beach and the '80 Democratic convention from New York

that way. It can be done.

The new system is better. The writing machine is portable. I see exactly what I'm doing. The telephone call is briefer because it takes only five minutes to transmit 12 column inches. The copy desk concentrates on reading the story without having to retype it. The shop pastes it on a page, again without having to retype.

ONE WEDNESDAY about 1 p.m., I was in the Capitol press room finishing a story on the morning Senate session when press room manager Wes Thorp brought through a touring group of junior high kids.

"Where you from?" I asked, finishing my salami sandwich and dialing a call to the computer in the central office.

"West Bloomfield," one kid answered. "Great. Look," I said, pointing to the 4-by-7-inch computer screen with a story about their local lawmaker.

I don't know whether the kids were awed into silence by the sight of someone dialing 18 inches of deathless prose about their hometown senator into a newspaper computer, or whether they were so used to electronics that they're blasé.

I'm still awed by this machine. The future is in front of me, and it weighs about three pounds.



C. D. STOFFER/Staff photographer

Gov. James Blanchard promises improvements to Haggerty Road congestion — but don't applaud just yet.

We need to tell our story

YOU KNOW, I gotta tell you folks, we're selling ourselves short — or maybe it's telling ourselves short. Honest, we are.

Take all this talk about how to attract business to Michigan, for instance. You hear a lot of that talk just about any place you go these days.

Naturally, you hear all the excuses — workmen's comp, high taxes, high wages. Good excuses, for sure. But excuses nevertheless.

But when talking about other states, people never seem to mention tax rates or wages. They mention location. The other day during a luncheon the talk turned to a query on why charge card companies always have their offices in some exotic location — Colorado, North Dakota or some place in the sunbelt.

You see, places gain reputations — many times undeserved. Some gain a reputation for being an exotic locale or fun or beautiful. You name the adjective and you'll find some other place than Michigan with it.

And in large part, that's why businesses move where they do. Sure, sure, wages and taxes play their part. But you'd have a pretty tough time convincing me that people would stop moving to the fastest growing and sunniest state, Florida, because wages increased. **DON'T BET** on it.

Now, if somehow the world twisted on its axis and Florida lost its sunshine,



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

that would be a reason for people and business to leave. But never wages or taxes.

People love to live in what they consider beautiful locations. And business executives who make the decisions where a corporation is going to move are no different than you or I. Hence — the sunbelt and Colorado and Seattle grew and prospered.

Of course, many of those places are beginning to lose their luster. The grass really does get a little brown on the other side of the fence — after you hop the fence, that is.

But some states have done a great job at marketing their assets.

We haven't. It's that short and simple — we have done a bad job at letting people know just how beautiful it is to live in this state.

Time and again I hear someone who was transferred to Michigan say how they dreaded it. And every time I hear those same folks express pleasure at

Time and again I hear someone who was transferred to Michigan say how they dreaded it. And every time I hear those same folks express pleasure at what they found when they got here.

what they found when they got here. Frankly, Michigan is a very beautiful and diverse state. But hardly anyone outside of Michigan knows about it. They are unaware of the thousands of beautiful lakes, the availability of fine housing, the challenging golf courses, the wonderful ski slopes, the mountains in northern Michigan.

WAIT, WHAT'S that you say — mountains? That's right, mountains. But you've got to pack through them to believe it. I have and their splendor.

The list of amenities is endless — sailing, fishing, hunting, resorts, restaurants. You name it and Michigan has it to equal any state.

We just need to do a better job of telling our story. Let's vow to bug the heck out of the next guy elected governor to better promote the amenities of this state.

It only makes sense — economic sense.