

Commissioners eye surplus for roads

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Rebellious Oakland County commissioners are ready to dip into the general fund surplus and spend it on roads.

They put together 13 votes — one shy of a majority — last week to bypass their committees and use \$5 million immediately. Instead the resolution will go to the finance and transportation committees.

"People out there are saying, 'You have a \$54 million surplus. We have a problem with roads. When are you going to do something?'" said Commissioner Marilyn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills, author of the nearly successful resolution.

"The county executive did not address the road problem," said Gosling, choosing her words carefully. Normally she's loyal to county executive Daniel T. Murphy.

MURPHY DOESN'T want to dip into the general fund for roads. He argues that the surplus may be only temporary; that roads problems



Commissioner Marilyn Gosling, 'on behalf of the Republican caucus,' proposed the county use \$5 million of its general fund surplus on roads.

brought on by the high technology boom will require many years of money and work; and that the money is better used on other capital items.

Asked about the rebellion last night, Murphy said, "First we'll have to see if they can do it (get 14 votes).

Then we'll have to see if I let it happen."

That was a clear threat he will use his veto.

It will take 18 votes — two-thirds

of the 27 commissioners — to override an executive veto. Only once in 12 years has a Murphy veto been overridden.

GOSLING'S SUDDEN move — "on behalf of the Republican caucus" — came at the close of Thursday's county board.

She acted as the transportation committee reached the two-thirds point in its series of 11 public hearings around Oakland County sounding out public sentiment on various tax proposals. The final hearing is at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 30, in Orion Township.

To Gosling, who attended several of the hearings and whose district includes growing Troy, and to others, the process has been getting tedious.

The Oakland County Road Commission, an autonomous unit, in 1985 surveyed cities and townships to tally their estimates of roads needed for economic growth and came up with a figure of \$740 million over 10 years — more than double what the

OCRC can expect from state fuel and weight taxes.

So in 1986 the OCRC began approaching county government to seek support for a voter-approved fuel tax and developer impact fees, among other sources.

That is what the county board's transportation committee hearings are about.

BACKING THE resolution were 12 Republicans and one Democrat, James Doyon of Madison Heights, whose district includes part of Troy.

Opposing it were seven Democrats and five Republicans — including board chairman Ray Rewold of Rochester, vice chairman Nancy McConnell of Bloomfield Hills, and finance chairman G. William Cadell of Walled Lake.

Two commissioners were absent — Thomas Law, R-West Bloomfield, and Angus McPherson, D-Berkley.

Rewold said he agreed to the move the previous day, but not to bypass the committee system.

Democrat Alex Perinoff of Southfield branded Gosling's move a "railroad" — I dislike motions made on the spur of the moment. Why is it brought up at the last moment?"

The 23-year board veteran said the general fund surplus is better reserved for settling lawsuits, remodeling 4-11 structures and asbestos removal from county buildings.

THE RESOLUTION admits that county property tax revenues may not be used for road purposes.

But it would direct the appropriation of \$5 million "from the unexpended 1986 non-property tax revenues to local communities for road improvement purposes." About half the county general fund comes from property taxes.

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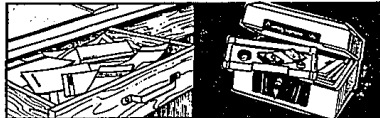
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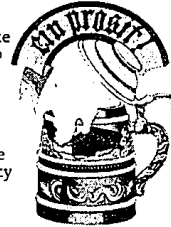
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