

Road money bills stuck in committee

By Tim Richard
staff writer

In March he was hoping for action by May.

Then state Sen. Richard Fessler hoped the Legislature would pass his road improvement bills by the end of the session this week.

Now the West Bloomfield Republican says, "We'll let 'em set over summer. The next deadline is Oct. 30."

TO OAKLAND County politics, the bottom line is that it will be spring of 1988 before they have the statutory tools to ask voters for more road money.

There's much frustration at the County Road Commission. In 1986, managing director John Grubba

unveiled a survey of dozens of communities, which showed their economic growth required \$740 million in new roads over 10 years.

That's \$74 million a year above existing revenues.

Fessler and Sen. Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, responded with a package of 10 bills permitting local fees and taxes and adjusting state programs. Because county road departments get their money from state-collected taxes, the Fessler-Binsfeld bills break lots of new ground.

DISCUSSION OF the package goes on in a "joint ad hoc" committee of senators and representatives rather than in Fessler's Transportation Committee.

There, his House counterpart,

Rep. Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, and other representatives take part in lengthy, continuing discussions.

"The Senate has worked on 'em since January. The House hasn't. They (representatives) had trouble moving 'em. It's a lack of knowledge," Fessler said.

Part of a compromise will involve each chamber initiating part of the package rather than the Senate starting everything.

"ANOTHER PROBLEM is the governor not wanting to support a tax increase of any kind. And the Democratic caucus is gun-shy," he said.

Democrats lost control of the Senate in 1984 when voters recalled two Democratic senators for supporting Gov. James J. Blanchard's 1.75 percent personal income tax rate increase.

Fessler sees Blanchard as wanting a shot at the 1988 Democratic vice presidential bid and not wanting a "big taxer" milestone around his neck.

Fessler views Blanchard as a real VP possibility — a former congressman, governor of a big Midwestern state, strong labor backing, good relations with business — "a real strength to a ticket headed by someone from the South or West, or even the East."

FESSLER'S AND Binsfeld's bills



Sen. Richard Fessler
now fall deadline

were on the state Senate calendar for several weeks.

But last week Senate floor leader Phil Arthurhult, R-Whitehall, had them sent back to committee as the Senate wrapped up work until fall.

"He wanted a clean calendar," explained Fessler, who didn't take the

action as a setback.

"If we don't do it in fall — by Oct. 30 — we get nothing," said Fessler. He sees no action possible in winter and spring of 1988 because House members face re-election.

That means the next target date would be the post-election "lame duck" session of 1988.

HERE'S THE STATUS of various parts of the Fessler-Binsfeld package:

- Out — a state gasoline tax increase of which counties would get 39 percent.
- In — optional county sticker of \$10 a vehicle, voter approved.
- In — \$3 local drivers license fee, voter approved.

• Maybe — state increase in fuel tax with the increment going entirely to counties and municipalities. "I've been talking three cents. That would yield \$137 million a year" to the local side. Hertel and some of the ad hoc committee liked it."

• In — legislatively directed construction of three trunklines in western Oakland County — the Haggetty corridor, the Milford Road corridor and a connection from M-59 to I-75. These would replace the dead M-275 project.

The package also mentions improvements on the Davison Freeway in Detroit and an east-west trunkline for southwestern Wayne County.

James Pitz, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, "is unhappy with that. We're saying, legislatively, we want these built," Fessler said.

Dinosaur contest winners selected

Jennifer Kopp, 9, of Livonia and David Groshong, 7, of Farmington Hills are first-prize winners in the Dinosaur Coloring Contest, co-sponsored by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and the Cranbrook Institute of Science.

Jennifer received first prize in the 8-10-year-old category while David took top honors in the 7 and under division.

The first-place winners will receive a \$25 gift certificate redeemable in the Institute of Science Dino Store and a one-year membership in the Institute of Science valued at \$35.

OTHER WINNERS in the 8-10 age division were: second place, Beth Gonzales, 8, of Redford Township, and third place, Hugo Lin, 8, of Rochester Hills.

Second- and third-place winners in the 7 and under age division were Peter Andrew Buff, 7, of Canton

Township and Andy Balog, 7, of Livonia.

Second-place winners receive a \$20 gift certificate and four passes to see the Dinosaur Dinosaur exhibit while third place will get a \$10 gift certificate and two passes.

HONORABLE MENTION in the 8-10 age group from Oakland County went to Shannon Oldfield, 8, Bloomfield Hills, and Joshua Kramer, 8, Troy. Honorable mentions in the age 7 and under category went to Matthew Gladysz, 6, Sterling Heights; Kim Sain, 6, Bloomfield Hills; and Christina Karas, 7, Rochester Hills. Honorable mentions will receive a dinosaur sticker.

The contest was offered in conjunction with the Dinosaur Dinosaur exhibit appearing at Cranbrook now through Sept. 7. The winning entries plus additional selected entries are on display in the museum.

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