

# I-696, once feared, now 'an opportunity'

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

At first, older cities feared the I-696 freeway would "lead to deterioration and squalor" in southern Oakland County.

But now, said Southfield city administrator Robert R. Block, "we've evolved to looking at it as an opportunity."

"We" means the I-696 corridor committee, composed of city managers in 13 towns. The group persuaded an Oakland County Board of Commissioners panel this week to invest \$10,000 in seed money for an economic consultant.

THE COUNTY'S Public Services Committee unanimously agreed, authorizing the executive's Department of Economic and Community Development to contract for a consultant for phase I of a redevelopment project.

The consultant's jobs will be to

- help the I-696 corridor communities:
- Coordinate land use planning.
  - Identify economic development and redevelopment opportunities.
  - Market the corridor to business, attracting more jobs.

"We don't want the I-696 corridor to be like other cities where people stand behind chain-link fences and wave at cars going by," said Joseph Joachim, Oakland's economic development director.

With the corridor committee, Joachim agreed that a county-funded consultant would be a good investment. Phase II of the project would cost \$90,000.

I-696, A freeway 20 years in the planning, and 10 more in construction, will run through southern Oakland and Macomb counties, bypassing Detroit, when the final link is completed in December 1989.

Its corridor is defined as 144 square miles: the Royal Oak, South-

field, Farmington and Novi areas. Some 450,000 people, nearly half of Oakland's population, live in the area bounded by 14 Mile on the north, Eight Mile on the South, Napier on the west and Dequindre on the east.

The so-called "south end" communities have pressured Oakland officials for help — particularly because so much county effort has gone into the high technology developments in Troy, Auburn Hills and Rochester Hills.

The Public Services Committee recommendation goes to the full county board, where routine approval is likely.

BUT COMMITTEE members had some bits of advice for the corridor city managers:

"Get your elected officials involved," said commissioner Ruel McPherson, D-Hazel Park.

Block agreed, noting that city managers started the effort because they had to deal with such municipal problems as construction, traffic, noise, maintenance of the service drive and mowing.

"Whoever is retained (as consultant) has to meet with the legislative bodies," Block said. "There are decisions to be made on zoning and condemnations."

Commissioner James E. Lanri, R-Royal Oak, advised bringing in investors through chambers of commerce channels.

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# Davis to head historical group

Michael W.R. Davis, a veteran newsman and publisher from Birmingham, has been appointed executive director of the Detroit Historical Society.

The appointment was announced by Philip G. Moon, president of the 66-year-old society. It is the major source of private funds for Detroit's Historical Museum on Woodward Avenue, Dossin Great Lakes Museum and Historic Fort Wayne. It also promotes appreciation of Detroit's regional history through programs of education and preservation.

Davis, a 30-year resident of the area, formerly was corporate communications director of The Detroit News and administrator of Gannett Foundation grants in Michigan.

He spent 25 years with Ford Motor Co.'s public affairs staff. Before joining Ford, he was in Business

Week magazine's Detroit bureau and a reporter for The Miami (Fla.) News.

Davis holds a bachelor's of arts degree in history from Yale University and master's of science degree in historic preservation administration from Eastern Michigan University.

He presently is working on his doctorate in history at Wayne State University and has co-authored a book on early 20th century architecture, "America's Favorite Homes," to be published by Wayne State University Press next spring.

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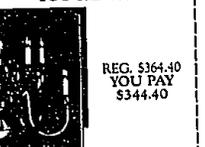
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