

# County commission candidates reject vehicle tax

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Oakland County Board of Commissioners candidate Democrat Steven Hill and Republican Donn Wolf oppose the proposed Oakland County \$25 vehicle registration fee, but for different reasons.

Both Farmington Hills residents, who will square off for the 27th district seat on Nov. 8, consider roads a county priority but prefer other financing methods for improvements.

Former city councilman Wolf, 53, gives county commissioners credit for putting the issue before voters, but is convinced the proposed \$25 vehicle fee on the Nov. 8 ballot will fail.

"I wanted to see people have more options (to choose from)," he said.

A Democratic Caucus legislative research analyst for the Michigan House, Hill, 27, calls the vehicle fee regressive because the greatest tax burden will fall to lower- and middle-income residents.

BOTH CANDIDATES agree the expected \$19 million generally annually from the fee would be woefully inadequate for the estimated \$940 million the Oakland County Road Commission maintains is needed in cities, villages and townships. The fee would be levied on every motor vehicle registered to a person or company in the county.

Wolf calls the fee inequitable because it isn't related to actual use of the roads.

"The occasional drivers must pay the same as drivers who use the

roads on a constant daily basis," said the Detroit Edison community and governmental affairs representative.

Hill doesn't believe the revenue generated from the vehicle fee will match the \$19 million revenue projected by county officials. He believes county officials should look elsewhere for road revenues.

Hill would like county officials to take a close look at tax abatements and subsidies given by the county and local governments to attract business. "This county is not lacking for economic development; it is lacking in sufficient infrastructure and other services to enhance the quality of life," Hill said.

WOLF WANTS the county to again approach the state Legislature

for other means of generating revenues to improve and expand the county's road system. "If we approach it the right way, it can be done," he said.

On Wolf's priority list for road financing is a greater effort for Oakland County to garner more from the state gas and weight taxes. "I don't agree we can't get more return on our road taxes," he said.

Impact fees are another option that should be considered. "I think some of these large companies — industrial and commercial — owe it to the communities," Wolf said.

A third option Wolf believes needs more investigation is a gas tax of perhaps 2 percent. "I would like to see these things on the ballot. Give the people the choice, which they did not have this time," he said.



Donn Wolf  
Republican



Steven Hill  
Democrat

## But Farmington chamber does like proposed \$25 vehicle tax

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

The Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce board of directors has given the thumbs-up to

Oakland County's proposed \$25 vehicle registration fee on the Nov. 8 ballot.

"We need road improvements," chamber president Jonathan Grant

said. "We have an active legislative committee. We frequently take positions on legislation, in particular anything that would have an effect on the business community. Roads certainly have an impact on the business community."

The chamber's resolution also supports the road commission's efforts to "increase and broaden the funding base for road improvements throughout the county..."

98.4-percent of the revenues generated are returned to the local communities. A 1.4-percent fee is taken by the Michigan Secretary of State for collection.

If the \$25 registration fee passes Nov. 8, approximately \$200 million would be generated throughout the

county in the next 10 years. Farmington would receive an estimated \$165,913 and Farmington Hills \$1.2 million annually for 10 years.

The Farmington City Council has publicly supported the proposed fee. The Farmington Hills City Council has not taken a position.

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The Goodfellows will make their holiday basket deliveries Dec. 17. "We welcome you to share the real Christmas spirit," said Goodfellow Jim Stevens.

The chamber board of directors supported the proposed registration fee after a presentation from Oakland County Road Commission managing director John Grubba. "It was an overwhelming consensus to support the registration fee," Grant said.

EFFORTS SUPPORTED by the chamber include: state fuel tax increases, consistent financing from the county general fund, enabling legislation permitting developer impact fees and permitting a local/county fuel tax option.

The "most attractive" facet of the proposed \$25 registration fee is that



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