

State funding OK'd for Haggerty Connector

By Sheila Phillips
special writer

State transportation officials approved \$34 million in funding for the Haggerty Road Connector on May 23, despite a wetlands squabble threatening to put the project on hold.

"We are going ahead as planned and still hope to start construction this fall," said Hank Lotoszinski, Michigan Department of Transportation planner. "If the project loses its standing, the money would merely be appropriated somewhere else."

The 1991 project budget includes a \$11.5-million grant from the Michigan Transportation Economic De-

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MDOT planner

velopment Fund.

If the connector gains federal approval, including the required environmental impact statement, funding is in place to begin work in October on the site to right-lane boulevard, to be built a half-mile

west of Haggerty Road from 12 Mile to Pontiac Trail.

Minor work will begin this October, followed by additional work on the interchange at 12 Mile connecting I-96, I-275, and I-96 at 12 Mile in 1991. In 1992, construction would

run from north of 12 Mile to Pontiac Trail.

BUT THE U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has thrown a kink into the plans by requiring that all affected communities adopt wetlands ordinances or before work can begin.

MDOT and Federal Highway Administration officials, however, maintain that the project is still on track.

"The EPA has a complaint, but it won't stop us from completing the environmental impact statement," Lotoszinski said.

FHA officials maintain they don't have the authority to require local communities to adopt wetlands ordi-

naances and say they will sign off on the document even if the ordinances are not in place.

Representatives from affected communities serving on the project's policy committee adopted a resolution in March supporting the FHA's position.

The resolution, which was drafted by Novi City Council Member Martha Hoyer, was recently signed by elected officials and is on its way to the EPA.

The EPA's request for local wetlands protection ordinances was made despite federal mandates protecting wetlands five acres or larger. The Haggerty policy group maintains that this request is an infringement on local rights of self-government.

Of the affected communities, Novi, West Bloomfield Township and Wolverine Lake Village have wetlands ordinances. Farmington Hills and Walled Lake do not.

The proposed boulevard will disturb about 30 acres of wetlands. But no net loss is anticipated because new wetlands will be recreated in areas surrounding the highway, according to MDOT.

EPA officials, however, are concerned about wetlands affected by development that will accompany the project. But MDOT and the policy committee believe development will occur with or without the Haggerty Road Connector.

Winds collapse wall at new school

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Detroit Edison officials said there were delays of several hours before they could respond to most repair calls.

THE FARMINGTON Hills Police Department fared no better. High winds knocked out power there, forcing use of emergency generators from 6 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Sunday. The department switched to emergency phones from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"It was somewhat of an inconvenience with our (annual) police department open house Sunday," Police Chief William Dwyer said.

In Farmington, the public safety department logged more than a dozen reports of downed wires and trees. Incidents were reported along Wesley, Orchard Lake, Hillview, Floral, Cloverdale, Lakeway and Farmington Road. A pole fire broke out in the 33000 block of Shawwassee at 6 p.m. Sunday.

In Farmington Hills, damage was estimated at \$18,000 when an industrial heat treating furnace ignited after malfunctioning when power was lost at 10:39 a.m. Sunday. Firefighters used a foam solution to extinguish flames in the oil furnace at Specialty Steel Treating, 20723 Sunnysdale.

Dozens of reports of downed trees and arcing wires caused plenty of inconvenience in Farmington Hills. For example, a tree was reported across the road at Knighton and Halsworth and lightning struck a telephone pole at Grand River and Drake at 11 p.m. Saturday.

At 2 p.m. Sunday, a tree fell on the roof of a car westbound on Highmeadow. The same tree fell on a car parked in front of a house along that street. Also Sunday, a tree fell on a car parked on Tuck.

Staff writer Bob Sklar contributed to this report.

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