

Some residents hope to zap Edison plan

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THE PROJECT would improve service reliability to Edison customers in Southfield, Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield, said Maurice Vermeulen, manager of Edison's Oakland Division.

"It won't prevent electric outages," he said, "but it will help us restore service quicker when outages do occur."

Vermeulen said he'd like to have the \$3.2 million overhead project "energized" by the summer of 1993. By that time, he added, demand for power will be even greater in the suburbs.

"If we don't get what we need by the peak summer (power) usage of '93... we might have to go into a rotating blackout system," the Edison official said.

At first Edison thought the lines could be strung along the southern edge of the busy I-696 freeway, but the state Department of Transportation said no because of safety concerns.

ONE PERSON who isn't raving about Edison's plan is Dan Jackson, president of the Orchard Ridge campus of OCC.

For one thing, he's worried about the hundreds of trees that would have to be cut down to make way for the wires. Also, the lines would cross the nature trails on campus.

'I understand that Edison wants to make a profit, but you can't put a price on health. You know what they say: It may be safe now, but what about 15 years down the road?'

— Elaine Roberts
Farmington Hills resident

"We tried to cooperate (with Edison), but when we saw the environmental damage... we said find another plan," said Jackson.

Before the wires even reach OCC-Orchard Ridge, they'd have to cross Poltr-MDOT, a wooded, largely undeveloped 70-acre piece of land south of I-696 and west of Farmington Road.

How — and if — Poltr-MDOT is developed has long been a concern for a group of Farmington Hills residents, who say they don't want the high voltage lines and poles on the property.

"There hasn't been enough critical dialogue to see what's going on here," said Roy Lindhardt, a businessman who sits on the city's Poltr-MDOT Ad Hoc Committee.

RESIDENTS along the route — especially in the subdivisions east of

OCC-Orchard Ridge — have spoken out on the plan. Many cite studies that show a higher incidence of cancer among people living near high voltage lines.

Many have said they favor replacing the lines underground. Instead of overhead — although Edison's Vermeulen said the underground route would hike the price 10 times to \$32 million. Who would pay the difference isn't clear.

Elaine Roberts, who lives in the Kimberly subdivision near 11 Mile and Middlebelt, said she wants the lines underground.

"I understand that Edison wants to make a profit, but you can't put a price on health. You know what they say: It may be safe now, but what about 15 years down the road?"

There has been a lot of talk about the lines in the Springland-LaMura

sub where Harry Johnson lives.

"I'm not concerned about the health issue — ions in the air and all that — but I'm against it because they (the poles and wires) are so unsightly," he said. "Putting up high tension lines is too easy. They're all over the country. Edison should explore other options."

SAID ANOTHER LaMura resident, who didn't want to be named, "I'm very concerned. It could destroy the neighborhood."

"If (the line) would go right by Mercy (High School) and Beechview Elementary School would be nearby, too. These are high tension wires. I don't think they should be where children are walking."

Edison's Vermeulen discounted the health concerns, saying that there's "nothing showing that high voltage causes a threat to the general public."

"Just think of our employees who work on those lines every day," he said.

The trees taken down on the college campus would be replaced through an Edison program, Vermeulen added, perhaps hiring OCC students to do the work.

The Farmington Hills City Council has endorsed Edison's efforts to beef up service, "but how to do it — how to get to point A to point B — is a whole different issue," said Tom Bissell, Hills public service director.

"Any time you have overhead (lines), you have concerns," Bissell added.

The lines issue will be discussed at the OCC trustees meeting at 7:30

p.m. Thursday, Feb. 27, at the Guest House at OCC's Bee Administration Center on Opdyke Road south of Square Lake Road in Bloomfield Hills.



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Seniors meet to discuss Social Security

Farmington area residents who were born after Jan. 1, 1917 and before Jan. 2, 1927 are invited to attend a meeting of the Farmington Area Commission on Aging at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 25, at Farmington City Hall, 23800 Liberty.

Monette McKinnon of Washington, D.C., who represents the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, will talk about residents born within the 10-year period who are known as "NOTCH babies."

About 12 million Americans fall

into this category and consequently receive an average \$45 less per month in Social Security benefits, which amounts to about \$500 less

per year than others who had similar employment, according to Republican U.S. Rep. William Broomfield of Birmingham.

The meeting is open to the public, as well as residents and staff of senior adult residences in the Farmington area.

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