

Bridge symbolizes first link in connector

By MARY LOU SONG
STAFF WRITER

Farmington-area residents will see it rising from the construction rubble: a 60-foot-high bridge that will span Interstates 696, 96 and 276 and become one of the first links to the Haggerty Connector in Novi.

At least that's how Tom Maki, project engineer for the Michigan Department of Transportation, describes the 1000-foot-long bridge which will run eastbound on I-96 to the Haggerty Connector, otherwise known as M-6.

"There are other bridges in the area close to that size," Maki said. "But it's still quite a structure."

Another 450-foot-long bridge crisscrosses underneath the superbridge, creating a tri-level structure of existing roadway and the two bridges.

"It will be interesting for drivers because as they drive through and see the project during different stages over a period of months, they'll see this structure rise out of the ground," Maki said.

Construction of the Haggerty Connector has already begun. The road will run five miles north of the interchange to Pontiac Trail, parallel to Haggerty Road in neighboring Novi.

But city officials say even though the connector is just west of Farmington Hills, city residents will still benefit from M-5 and the interchange.

David Call, assistant city manager for Farmington Hills, said city officials have long supported the construction of M-5, pointing out that city drivers can access I-696 only at Orchard Lake Road.

"Everyday 30,000 cars drive across 14, 13 and 12 Mile roads to Orchard Lake to access the freeway," he said. "This connector will allow much of the traffic from West Bloomfield, Canton Township, Union Lake and north Farmington Hills to access the expressway system more easily."

Construction of the interchange should be complete next year, but not in use until 1995 when the first segment of M-5, between the interchange and 12 Mile, is finished.

After acquiring the right-of-way necessary, Farmington Hills will widen 12 Mile at Haggerty Road, Call said. He said the city hopes the widening will be complete this year and that landscaping up to the city limits at Haggerty Road will begin next spring.

Maki said Farmington Hills

residents and drivers should not be inconvenienced by the construction. MDOT will rely on temporary lane closures, usually during off-peak traffic hours, during construction, Maki said.

"The only effect on traffic will be a minor occurrence," Maki said.

Regardless of possible construction-related slowdowns, Call holds that in the end, Farmington Hills can only benefit from the interchange and the Haggerty Connector.

"Farmington Hills will be positively impacted," Call said. "We're treating this like a second interchange even though it's not in Farmington Hills. It will take care of much of the traffic on Orchard Lake. It's been a long time in coming and we're glad it's beginning."

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