

# State earmarks grant for 8 Mile improvement plan

By TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

State government gave a boost to a plan to transform Eight Mile Road from an unsightly boundary to a "Main Street" boulevard serving 13 communities.

Patrick Nowak, state transportation director, passed on a \$50,400 federal study grant which will be added to with \$12,600 from the Southeast Michigan Council

## SEMCOG

of Governments.

"Instead of a boundary dividing us, Eight Mile could be an adhesive holding us together," said Debbie Schutt, Oakland County planning staff member. Schutt outlined the work city and township planners had done before SEMCOG's executive com-

mittee last week.

The \$63,000 will fund recommendations to improve pedestrian use of the corridor in the area from Farmington Road (on the Farmington-Livonia border) to I-94 on the east side, some 22 miles away.

SEMCOG delegates applauded Schutt's slide show but offered no comments on the Eight Mile "vision."

SEMCOG executive director John Amberger said he put no supporting resolution before the executive committee because "we can't keep jamming things on the agenda." But it was clear delegates were enthused. Some formal action is likely by the end of January.

Schutt said the planners recommend first a Community Development Corporation with all 13 cities and townships as members followed by a private development company to help redevelop businesses.

Eight Mile's key asset, Schutt said, is that it is less trafficked with the opening of the parallel I-69 freeway two miles to the north. Other assets:

"It has easy access to the entire region — I-94, I-75, the Lodge and I-275.

"Greenfield and Eight Mile is the population center of southeastern Michigan.

"There is a supply of affordable housing, high density, many shoppers and employees."

Eight Mile's bad points, she said, are cluttered signs, poor streetlighting, unsightly dumpsters, "adult" businesses, the lack of any one government being in charge, and a perception that it's a high crime area.

Among planners serving on the task force with Schutt were Ed Bayer of Wayne County, Nick Banda of Southfield, Sidney Blitz of Redford Township, John Nagy

of Livonia and Dan Lewis of Detroit, as well as Southfield Downtown Development Authority director Wendy Strip-Sittamer.

"The image of Eight Mile is really important," Strip-Sittamer said. "For too long, it's been a boundary."

The task force was called together by Southfield.

Eight Mile forms the northern border of Wayne County and the southern border of Macomb and Oakland. For about 19 miles — from Eastland to Inkster Road — it is divided. In the 1920s, an inter-county highway commission visualized it as a major traffic artery.

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Jan. 27; "Germany's Role" on Wednesday, Feb. 10; and "China" on Wednesday, Feb. 24.

Session two consists of lectures called "Trade and the Global Economy" on Wednesday, March 10; "Russia and the Central Asi-

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