

Connector

Public invited to info meetings

On Tuesday, Aug. 24, Oakland County residents will have the opportunity to learn more about the Northwestern Connector Project and find out what kind of solutions are being considered to ease traffic congestion on Northwestern Highway and Orchard Lake, 14 Mile and West Maple Roads in Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield Township.

The Northwestern Connector project is a cooperative transportation improvement project with Farmington Hills, West

Bloomfield, the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Road Commission for Oakland County.

The Northwest Connector Project Public Information Meetings will be held 3:30-5 p.m. and 7-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 24, at Orchard Lake Middle School, 6000 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield Township.

The purpose of these meetings is to allow area residents to review the alternative concepts under consideration and obtain

more information about the project from the project study team.

The public information meetings will be organized like an open house and the public can come at any time during either session and speak in small groups with members of the Steering Committee and Project Team. No formal presentation will be made at either meeting. The informal meeting format will allow the public to gather information on the project on a one-to-one basis regarding environmental issues, engineering and design and aesthetic and landscaping themes, and will allow citizens to express their concerns and provide detailed input regarding specific project components.

The ultimate purpose of the Northwestern Connector Project is to develop and analyze alternative road improvements, which will accommodate existing and projected (2020) traffic. The corridors serve as a major transportation link between the primarily residential portions of the region and the two major highways to the south: Northwestern Highway and I-696. The study is scheduled for completion by April 2001.

Additional information can be obtained from the Northwestern Connector Project web site at www.dickcorp.com/seg. Comments can also be e-mailed from the project web site.

Nursing home reform is topic

The Oakland County branch of the Michigan Campaign for Quality Care, a statewide effort to improve the quality of life for Michigan's nursing home residents, will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 26.

Anyone interested in nursing home reform may attend. The meeting will be at Southfield Presbyterian Church, 21675 W. 10 Mile, east of Lakewood. For more information, call 478-7293.

NETg surfing for school-company link

BY TIM SMITH
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"Anytime... Anywhere Learning" is what brochures and other materials dub as the mantra for NETg, a multimedia training ground.

That's exactly the reason why NETg employees such as David Galvin of Farmington Hills are toiling to get the attention of local school districts, whose technology-based education is exploding.

In Farmington Public Schools, for example, the school board in June awarded \$3.1 million in bids for the purchase of 1,600 classroom computers, software and installation. That money was taken out of a specially designated capital projects fund.

But Galvin and other NETg representatives insist there is plenty of room for the 31-year-old subsidiary of the \$4-billion publishing company Harcourt Brace to point-and-click their assistance in the direction of public schools.

And that's even in cases where, such as the Farmington district, the commitment to computers and Power Point savvy instructors is already in full swing.

Power Point is one of the standard computerized educational software programs used in Farmington classrooms, said Peggy Schmidt, director of media services for the district.

The question recently was posed to the company's Galvin, Bill Bonner and Fred Fedarrieta - why would a school district enlist NETg (National Education Training Group) if it were already providing teachers with training?

"A teacher typically goes off-site to learn Power Point," explained Galvin, an account manager. "Our point is, he or she could be at home learning it with our interactive, technology-based simulation. ... Because it's self-paced learning, they can set it up anyway they want."

"It's up to individuals how much they take in," noted Bonner. "We use the phrase 'Anytime, Anywhere Learning' and that gets to the whole value of our technology-based training. It's extremely convenient and flexible and isn't tied to a class or schedule."

Another feature is that they can tap into any of the 400 CD-ROM-taught courses listed in the NETg catalog. Among those: Microsoft Word 6.0 for Windows; Microsoft Word '07 Expert User; Netscape LiveWire Pro; Server-Side Programming with JavaScript and Perl 5; Working with Data and Communications.

NETg could help in districts in which technology already is a priority, said Bonner, by providing teachers or administrators with timely refreshers. Those include everything from Microsoft Word to Power Point presentations (an educational demonstration-making tool more students now are using) to how to create a pre-formatted "template," he added.

Galvin said the hope is for Oakland Schools to consider signing on with NETg, perhaps prompting individual districts within that consortium (such as Farmington) to begin using the company as a resource.

Districts who join as part of a group would save significantly over joining separately. Galvin estimated that an annual fee for solo districts would be about \$20,000. Fees would only approach \$10,000 each as part of a consortium.

Although Galvin said he has had conversations with Rosemarie Simon and Richard Strasz of Farmington



Surfing: David Galvin is hoping NETg can get the school district's interest.

schools' information technology and training department, nothing has been agreed upon, nor are there any guarantees an agreement will be reached.

"The timing is perfect" for the Farmington district to sign on, Galvin emphasized. "They're getting their infrastructure set up and ready to go. School is just around the corner and this is the time."

Schmidt said that the district currently has a mix of personal IBM computers and Macintoshes.

According to Fedarrieta, NETg is making strides nationally, and especially in Michigan.

"This year, a lot of stuff is going on in Michigan and that's tied to the economy," Fedarrieta said. "And when the money is good, it seems to go to the schools. Now there's a big push across the country for technology-based education and training."

In Michigan alone, NETg currently is working with the Royal Oak School District, Cranbrook, Lake Orion Community Schools, Focus/HOPE, University of Michigan and several eastern Upper Peninsula K-12 schools.

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