

Farmington Observer

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Invest in real relief for I-275 residents

Using words like "living hell" might seem like dramatization, but for residents who live close to traffic on I-275, nothing less could capture the essence of their dilemma.

It would be easy to tell residents they shouldn't have built their homes near a freeway, but 15 of the 28 subdivisions affected were there before the freeway. What's more, when the road was constructed, residents have said they were promised noise mitigation, which has never materialized.

For years, everyone has waited patiently for someone in power to do something. While state officials have told residents to wait — for reconstruction, for asphalt capping, for tinted concrete — the noise problem has only grown more critical.

The state highway commission listened intently to residents' concerns last week, and we applaud them for their patience. More importantly, we share the pride Mayor Nancy Bates expressed Monday for the dignity with which residents conducted themselves.

"I've never been prouder of our citizens," she said. "They went there not in a wailing or combative mode."

Instead, they simply told their stories and offered suggestions about noise abatement, asking for the kind of help only state officials can provide. And they were told to wait yet again.

What's more, residents were given reason to expect a solution might be a long time coming. More than 600 arrests in the State of Michigan currently meet or exceed the standard for freeway noise mitigation. It would take billions to remedy all those situations.

As it has been explained to local officials, the problem lies in the state's decision to devote funds to building and improving roads, rather than dealing with noise abatement — compounding the problem they refuse to address.

A solution is long overdue, and like residents and officials, we have been inundated with information from both the asphalt and concrete industries. Both offer surfacing alternatives that could cut down on the noise.

As the city of Farmington Hills' com-

missioned study concluded: "Certain roadway surface treatments have the potential to be effective in reducing traffic noise. However, sufficient supporting information is not available to determine the reasonableness of such measures."

It doesn't make sense to keep sinking thousands of dollars into surfacing, when no one can seem to agree on which type will do the job. Residents need real relief.

The study suggests some common sense measures, like rezoning so that no additional single-family homes can be built along I-275 and strict building spec-

Bottom line, consultants recommend a barrier made of "massive" materials.

ifications that would require extraordinary noise mitigation measures, like noise barriers, in nearby developments.

Bottom line, though, consultants recommend a continuous barrier made of "massive" materials, within 20 feet of the roadway and starting from 14 to 20 feet above the highway surface, to reduce peak hour noise levels.

Concrete blockades have their drawbacks. Let's face it: Big walls are ugly and can become real eyesores if not maintained properly.

But consultants say they would reduce the noise to tolerable levels. Residents who can't hold a conversation in their backyards might be willing to make the trade-off.

Asphalt and concrete industry representatives could present their cases from now until St. Swithun's Day, each convincing a separate segment of the affected population. We believe it's time to abandon the road surfacing debate and focus attention and the state's limited funding on barrier solutions that will really make a difference for residents.

dent performance, spending, return on resources, learning environment, taxes and debt, and demographics.

All of the data will be available on S&P's Web site, and school officials will be offered the chance to write a response to the study. Web links to each district's Web site also will be provided.

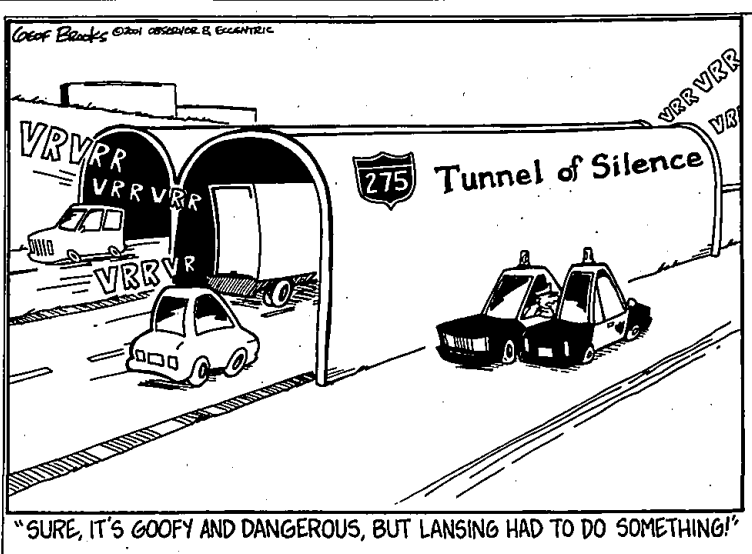
Despite the potential for controversy, Cox said he believes the vast majority of districts will be pleased with the results of the study. His biggest criticism was reserved for the state itself, for doing a

We welcome this new program, and urge local school officials to embrace it as well. If nothing else, the wealth of data generated by the reports should help local school boards and business managers track how school dollars are being spent, and how specific programs are faring in relation to the level of investment.

less than stellar job of gathering and maintaining accurate school data.

"There were some areas where the data either wasn't available or obviously wasn't accurate," he said. "We addressed this weakness in our summary report."

Our communities are blessed with quality public schools, but all can stand improvement in some areas. Hopefully, local officials will accept the S&P reports and use them to map future strategy in providing the best possible education for all students.



LETTERS

Mentor misquote

This letter is to clarify what I said during my speech at the 37th Annual Dinner for the Chamber of Commerce. I spoke about the Farmington Schools mentoring program. The Farmington Observer accidentally misquoted me. What I said about the mentoring program is that it is nice to have someone care about me other than my parents. I also like the mentoring program because I get to meet new people and watch them working at their jobs. I want to thank the Observer for giving me an opportunity to clarify what I said at the Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner.

Taylor Robinson
Farmington Hills



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BERNARD
Women at work: Taylor Robinson attended the Annual Chamber Dinner with her mentor, Carleigh Flaherty.

ship to the United States. As an immigrant, myself, I am proud of that event and of the work of the committee.

If Mr. Oliverio had been at the Rainbow Breakfast he would have realized that the more than 400 persons who participated were working toward unity not division. He would have realized that some 73 people were honored for their work in bringing together our diverse population.

As for Granholm's record as Attorney General she should be commended, not vilified, for trying to get the Public Service Commission to step up to its responsibility in protecting the consumers and not the large utility companies. She is the only friend the consumers have in Lansing as the rest of the elected officials, as a group, as well as the Public Service Commission continue to do the bidding of the utilities.

As past mayor, I appeared several times before the Public Service Commission on behalf of our citizens, only to be rebuffed each time while the PSC went along with the utilities. The heavy utility company political contributions to most elected officials are proving to be a good investment for them.

Attorney General Granholm is in our corner and should be praised for her consumer protection efforts.

(A footnote to the Oliverio letter. He claims to be a member of the Ethics Committee. There is an Ethics Committee in Farmington Hills. It was disbanded several years ago for lack of activity. Even before being disbanded the committee had not met for several years.)

Aldo Vagnozzi
Farmington Hills

Political hacks

(Phil Power's) column of Feb. 1 hits the nail on the head. Although we differ greatly on the formulas for funding our two great universities, it appears we agree that the method of selecting the governing bodies need help. Both parties seem to "thumb their noses" to higher education when they nominate "political hacks" to run for these spots, based on their service to their respective parties rather than service, knowledge, and loyalty to the universities they will represent.

Dr. John H. Richardson
Farmington

Letter smeared Granholm

Once again, Ron Oliverio has wielded his pen to smear another woman elected official. The time the pen is aimed at Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, who has won widespread acclaim during her first two years in office.

He attacks Granholm for an excellent speech she made at the Rainbow Breakfast, which celebrated the way our two cities have assimilated the various ethnic groups who live here into a single community dedicated to making the American dream work for everyone.

The Multicultural, Multiracial Committee should be commended not criticized by Oliverio for helping take the diversity that is here and molding it into a single purpose. Among the activities of this committee is the annual Heritage Festival where last year over 100 persons took their oath of citizen-

are they going to say when she asks, "Why did mommy and daddy die?"

"They were trying to save four seconds?" I never really thought about what if there was no tomorrow. Now I think about it all the time, every time I drive my car through an intersection (will someone run a red and end my life now), a heart attack while I take the trash out, is everything "in order," like it or not am I ready to die right now.

Everybody has been late or in a hurry when a train is coming. Most people have at least thought about "I can beat it." We don't win ties, but you do lose. Stop for the train.

If you have to "think about" something, think about the 300 semi trucks that aren't on the road with you because of that one train, or better yet think about your kids, husband, wife, mother or father when someone has to explain why you're dead.

Four seconds.

Michael Rits
Livonia

Reparations questioned

Whether one believes that descendants of slave blacks in the 1800s deserve reparations or not, would it be politically correct to suggest that the food stamps and other entitlement program distributions have more than covered the suggested value of reparations necessary to atone for the living conditions experienced by blacks during the years of slavery?

Does the suggestion have merit or might the race hustlers find the suggestion not their liking?

Neil Goodbread
Livonia

Four seconds

February 15, 2001: Just another day. That's how it started anyway, for me and probably for a man and woman that "met me" that night.

Had plans for the weekend, two birthday parties next month, vacation this summer. I'm sure they had similar plans. We "met" that night when my train collided with their car at Jon Kronk and Lonyo, wasn't really even a train, just two engines going about 45 mph (still 500,000-plus pounds).

There are three different "eyewitness" accounts about what happened, but all three said they drove around cars that were stopped at the railroad gates. I had three bright lights (two of them flashing), blowing a horn that would give you a headache it's so loud. They had to see me.

Playing chicken, or just in a hurry? Doesn't really matter, they're both dead. If they waited four seconds, I would have gone by, we would have never met. They could have done some of the things they had planned, and I wouldn't be thinking about it at least 10 times a day every day.

Four seconds. The speed limit was 50, I complied with all the rules, I don't feel "guilty," I was just doing my job. I feel bad; for the conductor, who saw "a grapefruit size hole where her forehead and brain should be," for the police, EMTs, and "clean up crew" that had to investigate, measure, check, and clean up the scene, for the family members that will never be with them again.

Most mostly for a five-year-old little girl — the last thing I saw at the scene — a crying little girl, hugging two adults, family members of the dead couple? Was she their daughter? What

The Farmington Observer welcomes longer articles as guest columns. Send them to the editor at 3411 Grand River, Farmington, MI. 48335 or e-mail them to jhubred@oe.hometowncomm.net

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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