

'Highway Bonds Are Committed'

By EMORY DANIELS

PONTIAC
Oakland County has paid out nearly \$1.5 million in interest on bonds to extend Northwestern Highway and, on that basis alone, intends to compel the Michigan Dept. of State Highways to build a freeway.

That promise was made by William Richards, Oakland County Road Commission chairman, in testimony Wednesday before a State House investigating committee meeting in Pontiac.

In 1957, the state paid a \$25 million bond issue to construct Northwestern. Every year since 1957, Richards notes, the county has "faithfully paid out \$90,000 in debt service on those bonds, as provided in the contract."

"Anyone familiar with the condition of county roads will recognize that diversion of \$90,000 annually from immediate road maintenance has been painful for the road commission."

"The Board of County Road Commissioners will use all available means to compel, if necessary, performance of the contract."

This statement had concurrence of the other road commission members, Fraser Stamen and Fred L. Harris of Farmington Hills.

Richards declined to comment, but left the committee with the implication that the county would be open to a request from the state to amend the contract to stop the extension at M-275 instead of proceeding to US-24.

Richards said Oakland has been pressing for extension because it is vitally necessary to serve the motoring public of Oakland County.

"I categorically deny that the road commission has been influenced by developers or speculators in its position on the urgent need for the Northwestern extension."

"In fact, the board's reaction to printed statements of certain land speculators par-

allels what I would assume the general public reaction was - one of disgust with the arrogant, self-serving boasts attributed to these speculators."

Richards then blasted Mike Tako of SEMCOG for misleading the committee during Tuesday's testimony that three successive, "hastily revised working papers" had gone through an elaborate policy review by SEMCOG before being sent to the Highway Dept.

None of the three reports, Richards maintained, were ever submitted to the SEMCOG transportation committee which is the first level of policy procedure.

As late as Friday, Sept. 21, Richards said, a county road engineer was denied his specific request to see a copy of the staff working paper.

"So those who hastily accused the Highway Dept. of suppressing a report might do well to re-examine the situation in the light of facts."

"The documents in ques-

tion are nothing more than working drafts representing the assumptions and conclusions of Tako and don't have the force of all levels of SEMCOG."

Tako has suggested Northwestern extension could be avoided by improving the east-west and north-south arterials in the Northwestern corridor.

"If we were somehow able to spend even \$18 million a year on construction, it would take us 100 years to meet the valid road requirements for a point in time only 17 years away," Richards countered.

If Tako had checked the county's financial needs and resources, Richards added, he could have avoided the embarrassment of issuing "an invalid if not unprofessional, assumption."

"There isn't any earthly way Oakland County can validate Tako's erroneous assumption. For that would require us to convert the major arterials in the corridor to

five-lane thoroughfares.

"Relying on our contract with the highway department to produce the Northwestern extension, we haven't included any such wholesale improvement of arterials in the corridor in our 20-year plan."

"It is doubtful that residents of the corridor would appreciate having every square mile of land bounded by five lanes of carbon monoxide exhaust fumes and unexpressed traffic noise."

"At best, the Tako papers express a minority opinion as to an alternative to Northwestern. That alternative isn't viable from nearly any standpoint."

Richards maintains the official position of SEMCOG, as expressed in its "Regional 20 Year Highway Improvement Program," is construction of freeway on Northwestern from I-66 to I-275.

"The concept of a Northwestern limited or controlled access highway had its inception as early as 1928," Richards concluded, and the

county road commission has consistently supported that need, on record, for decades.

The committee then heard from William Fogdall, director of the engineering dept. for Oakland County Road Commission who has a BS in civil engineering and a master's in highway engineering.

He recited effects of the 1-696 and 1-275 construction on the county. "Being a mobile society, road improvements tend to accelerate growth. Consequently, as the county road system has improved so has the area in question been developing at an ever increasing rate."

"Several county roads exceed their design capacity already with many others fast approaching a congested condition."

The construction of Northwestern through Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield will extend the life of our two-lane road system in the area by reducing the volume of cars using county roads."



SUSAN LATHAM is appearing in the traveling production of "No, No, Nanette" which will be produced in Flint, Lansing and Ann Arbor this fall. Miss Latham is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Latham of 23355 Middle Belt, Farmington Hills and is a Farmington High School graduate.

Taxi Rates Hiked

FARMINGTON
Taxi cab rates for Farmington residents will be going up, following the action taken by the Farmington city council Monday.

Vern Foster, owner of Suburban Checker Cab Co., asked for and received approximately a 20 per cent increase for his company, which serves most west side suburbs.

The last rate increase was in 1969.

In asking for the increase, Foster mentioned rising gasoline prices and the need for his drivers to make a living wage."

Councilman Frederick Seibert asked whether the increase would create a hardship for senior citizens dependent on the cabs for transportation.

Foster said about 25 per cent of his customers are senior citizens.

The new rates are 60 cents for the first 1/6 mile, 10 cents for each additional 1/6 mile and 10 cents for each additional 45 seconds waiting time.

3 To Study Overseas

FARMINGTON
Students from the Farmington area are participating in the foreign study program of Kalamazoo College.

Participating in the program during their junior year of study are William McDewitt, son of Dr. and Mrs. Frank J. McDewitt of 33300 Raphael; Barbara Pape, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Pape of 22176 Red Clover; and Walter Winterbottom, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Winterbottom of 26360 Powers.

Miss Pape and Winterbottom will study in Bonn, Germany, taking regular university classes taught in German. McDewitt will study in Erlangen, Germany, and also will take university courses taught in German.

Bloodmobile Stops Here

FARMINGTON
A need for a steady supply of safe, volunteer blood continues. To meet the need a Red Cross bloodmobile will be available for the Farmington area from 2 p.m. Oct. 4 at the Moose Lodge, 27618 Eight Mile Road.

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