

Northwestern Connector Project Begins

Top officials of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the charter township of West Bloomfield, the city of Farmington Hills, and Henry Ford Health System were joined by U.S. Congressman Joe Knollenberg and other public officials on October 24 to officially mark the beginning of construction on the long-anticipated Northwestern Connector project.

Congressman Knollenberg secured several critical federal grants to help fund the project.

The event took place at Henry Ford Medical Center – West Bloomfield on West Maple Road, just west of Drake Road in West Bloomfield Township. This phase of the Northwestern Connector project includes widening the road in front of the medical center as well as constructing a modern roundabout at the Maple/Drake intersection.

"In addition to increasing safety and reducing congestion, investments in our roads are essential to improving commerce and livability in Oakland County," Congressman Knollenberg said. "I commend the Road Commission for Oakland County for its diligence and hard work in making this project a reality."

RCOC Managing Director Brent Bair concurred with Congressman Knollenberg. "The fact that we are here today is testament to the cooperation and diligence of many people and agencies, including the Michigan Department of Transportation, the city of Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield Township, as well as the financial support of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners," Bair said. "And, once again, Congressman Knollenberg has come through with funding for another critical Oakland County road project."

The Northwestern Connector Project, led by RCOC, in cooperation with MDOT, West Bloomfield Township



Left to right: Road Commission for Oakland County Managing Director Brent Bair; Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital chief executive officer Gerard van Grinsven; Farmington Hills Mayor Vicki Barnett, West Bloomfield Township Supervisor David Flaisher; Road Commission for Oakland County Board Vice-Chairman Larry Crane; Congressman Joe Knollenberg; and Michigan Department of Transportation Metro Region Engineer Greg Johnson participate in the Northwestern Connector groundbreaking event.

and the city of Farmington Hills, is intended to improve the flow of traffic on the highly congested roads around the area where M-10 (Northwestern Highway) dead-ends at Orchard Lake Road, and move that traffic toward M-5, 4 1/2 miles to the west. The project also is expected to enhance motorist and pedestrian safety.

In addition to the Maple/Drake roundabout and the Maple Road widening in front of Henry Ford, the project includes the construction of seven other modern roundabouts and the widening of Orchard Lake Road between 14 Mile Road and Maple.

RCOC has selected the low-bid construction firms that will build the Maple/Drake roundabout and widen Maple in front of the medical center. Initial utility work will begin on both projects this fall, with the majority of construction getting under way in spring 2007.

The Maple/Drake roundabout will be constructed by L. D'Agostini & Sons Inc., of Macomb Township, for a cost of \$1.8 million. The widening of Maple in front of Henry Ford Medical Center will be constructed by John Carlo Inc., of Clinton Township, for \$350,000.

The project will also include the widening of both 14 Mile and Maple roads between Orchard Lake Road and M-5, though that portion of the project is not yet funded. In all, the project is expected to cost approximately \$140 million.

"This project has been long coming and MDOT is very proud to be in partnership with the Road Commission for Oakland County and all others who have advocated for this project. We feel that this project is going to increase mobility and the ability of people to get around on the transportation system by creating a smoother traffic flow in this part of the county," Greg Johnson, MDOT Metro Region engineer, said.

"We welcome these much needed improvements to our roads," stated West Bloomfield Township Supervisor David Flaisher. "We expect that, when construction is completed, our major roads will be less congested, safer and smoother than they have been for many years, and motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and others will have an improved quality of life as a result of the improvements."

"The Northwestern Connector Project is a great example of how our city adapts to change," observed Farmington Hills Mayor Vicki Barnett. "Significant growth and development have led to traffic congestion and gridlock. This improvement project will not only help reduce these problems but provide a safer alternative for our residents and businesses."

"We are very pleased with the spirit of collaboration and support throughout this project in Oakland County," said Gerard van Grinsven, president and chief executive officer of Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital, which will open in July 2008. "We plan to continue working with the community and do our part to assure that the project is completed on time and that everyone will be proud to be part of it." ■