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Michigan Needs A New Direction

*By Aram Kalousdian, Editor
July 30, 2007
Michigan Contractor and Builder
State representative lauds efforts to invest in transportation*

There will be more efforts to regionalize state government and there will be a coordinated effort to invest in more public transportation. That was a message that State Representative Marie Donigan delivered at the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) Detroit Chapter 183's 12th Annual Construction Industry Night Awards Event in June at the Orchard Lake Country Club in Orchard Lake.

"We all know that an investment in public transportation is an investment in our future. An improved transit system is a necessity and a key component in the next Michigan economy. Modern transit spurs private development that fuels the economy, promotes tourism, links people to work and to healthcare, and will make Michigan competitive in the 21st century," Donigan said.

"We must invest in ourselves if we expect others to invest in us too. Every \$1 billion invested in the nation's transportation infrastructure supports approximately 47,000 jobs. A typical state or local government could realize a 4-percent to 16-percent gain in revenue due to the increases in income and employment generated by investments in transit. In 2000, the average downtown vacancy rate for cities without rail was 12.8 percent, but 8 percent for all cities with rail transit.

"We know that the status quo is not working anymore. In Southeast Michigan, nearly 30 percent of the people don't have a car, have no access to a car, and will never have a car. We are leaving people behind in droves, and I believe that a state that leaves people behind will never grow and prosper. I think everyone needs to be engaged in Michigan's economic recovery.

"In Michigan, transit agencies carry hundreds of thousands of people to work, schools, hospitals, and shopping in 79 counties everyday. People in Michigan are ready for transportation alternatives. More than 11 million passengers rode Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) buses in 2005, up 10 percent from 2004. This is the first year since 2001 that ridership on SMART buses surpassed 10 million passengers. Those numbers are impossible to ignore.

"Currently, there isn't enough money being collected for roads or transit. Michigan is well below average in the amount of money spent on roads and transit per capita."

Donigan said that pending legislation to raise the gas tax in Michigan is an important




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conversation for the state to have. "I like the bipartisan, wide-ranging conversation that surrounds it," Donigan added.

Donigan has been appointed chair of the Public Transit Subcommittee of the House Standing Committee on Transportation.

NAWIC Detroit Chapter 183 awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to students enrolled in a construction-related program at a college or university.

Bradley W. Shell, a junior in Ferris State University's construction management program, was a recipient of the 2007 Margaret Ellis & Anona White NAWIC Scholarship.

Mark E. Westphal, a junior in the University of Detroit Mercy's architecture program, was also a recipient of the 2007 Margaret Ellis & Anona White NAWIC Scholarship.

The Drafting/Design competition was developed to introduce young people to the construction industry and the many different careers that are available in the industry. The competition challenges students in grades nine through 12 to use their imaginations to design a project. They develop the drafting techniques to prepare the technical drawings required to demonstrate their design on paper. The students are provided a design problem, a site plan description, and a list of drawings with specific requirements for each drawing. Students have six months to work on the projects. Award recipients at the chapter level are entered for a regional competition.

Sherri Davis, of the Randolph Career and Technical Center, of Detroit, was the first place award recipient in the 2007 NAWIC Drafting/Design Competition; Kyran Willis, of the Randolph Career and Technical Center, was the second place award recipient; and Tipu Sultan, of the Randolph Career and Technical Center, was the third place award recipient.

Tomboy Tools, Inc. received the Distinguished New Constructor award. Atwell-Hicks, Inc. was the recipient of the 2007 Longevity with Integrity award in the Architect/Engineer category.

Sorenson Gross Construction Company was the recipient of the 2007 Longevity with Integrity award in the Contractor/Subcontractor category. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Michigan chapter was the recipient of the 2007 Longevity with Integrity award in the Material/Equipment Supplier/Other category. Sheryl Maibach, of Barton Malow, received the 2007 Construction Woman of the Year award.

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