

1989 STATE OF COUNTY ADDRESS

Daniel T. Murphy  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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1989

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PONTIAC MICHIGAN

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, and fellow citizens.

This morning, I am optimistic about 1989.--optimistic about our progress in the solid waste program, economic development, transportation, and 9-1-1. Enthused about the other service programs which are the backbone of our county. Excited to be a leader of the county team.

Let me begin by addressing our most pressing issue in Oakland -- disposing of our solid waste.

Since 1974, the disposal of our garbage, our trash, has been one of the most important problems facing this county. Looking at the 15-year history of moving this project toward completion, is proof that the wheels of progress grind exceedingly fine and exceedingly slow.

There are a lot of people who provided input into this project and for all of those voices--I am grateful.

Thanks to combined efforts of our Board Chairman, Roy Rewold; our consultants, and committee members, the decisions of the solid waste project should be finalized during this calendar year.

As you know the solid waste project is multi-faceted.

---First our waste will be recycled to the extent possible, including composting of yard waste.

---Then the balance will be incinerated in a Trash to Energy Program.

---Finally, the disposable ash will be monofilled at an ash disposal site and certain unburnables will be disposed of in a sanitary landfill.

During this month, we will be accepting proposals from vendors interested in operating the recycling centers which should be up and running sometime in 1991.

As most of you know, the landfill siting committee has been selected and it will be making a site recommendation to us by early fall.

Along with the incinerator, the monofill, which will be used solely to landfill ash from the incinerator will be operating by 1993.

Even quicker than that, the composting facility is expected to be running by early fall--just in time to accept the autumn leaves.

To all of you who have worked so hard on pulling this project together--I thank you.

Now let's turn toward another major initiative. I'd like to share with you our economic development success. In 1982, when I came to you with my program there was \$250 million of construction started in Oakland County. Today, seven years later, we can boast of having about \$1.5 billion of new construction in 1988. Our unemployment rate now stands at 5.4 percent down from 16.9 percent seven years ago.

Looking ahead to 1989, we project a 4 percent increase in new jobs, putting 24,000 more people to work than we did last year.

By 1990, we expect the pace to quicken as the new companies in and around the Oakland Technology Park begin to build up their work forces. This single development, alone, is expected to give 52,000 people jobs and bring in \$3 billion worth of new business investments before the turn of the century.

In addition, we expect that the completion of I-696 in south Oakland County later this year will bring even more business activity to the 20 communities along its route.

We do expect building construction to slow down slightly during 1989, until the record construction of the last three years is absorbed.

With this growth in new business however, we will not divert our major focus of attention which is assisting the growth and prosperity of business presently in the county.

In spite of these successes, we still have communities which are not fully sharing in this prosperity. Generally, they are our older communities such as Pontiac, and those along our southern border, which led Oakland County's growth earlier this century.

I have directed our Department of Community and Economic Development to not only continue their efforts to assist these communities, but to increase their focus so all residents can share in the prosperity.

But prosperity brings emerging problems and challenges.

I do not believe we can continue to reap the benefits of increased employment opportunities without preserving and reinvesting in our high quality of life.

Clearly, it is time to manage our growth more effectively. We must look to our existing infrastructure and revitalize it.

I have discussed this with the other chief elected officials of Greater Detroit, and we are developing strategies which will:

- encourage economic development in areas which are presently served by basic infrastructure.
- discourage urban sprawl.
- promote cost effective uses of existing infrastructure.
- encourage existing companies to remain and expand in their present locations.

---support the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life in our urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods as essential elements in a balanced economy.

Within the next few months, we expect to introduce these strategies to you and to local community officials.

When we talk about all of this growth, it would be remiss if we did not talk about roads and road construction. As you know, the ballot issue to assess a \$25 vehicle registration fee for Oakland County motorists failed in November. I did not favor this taxing method, and frankly I am not surprised it died.

I still favor a local option gasoline tax which would be used for road improvement in Oakland County working on the theory that he who drives the most uses the most gasoline, therefore pays his fair share for road improvement.

But the gasoline tax appears to have a questionable fate in Lansing. Some legislators tell us we had our chance, forget it--live with what you have.

I don't buy that defeatist attitude and neither does a group in Troy called Coalition On Road Enhancement. That group has pledged to branch out and get people from the entire county involved to bring the message back to Lansing. The message Oakland County wants to take care of its own roads.

Remember--when we talk about state-local highway expenditures--Michigan ranks 41 out of 50 and is considerably below the national average...

A serious concern for a state which depends upon tourism and is working hard to attract high technology growth.

When we talk about roads and transportation it only seems appropriate to talk about public transportation as well.

On January 17, we had our initial meeting of the bus service formerly known as SEMTA. This reorganization has been a long-time coming and finally it has been reorganized so that elected officials in suburban counties can be held responsible for a bus system which services our taxpayers, while Detroit's system (D-Dot) will be operated by the city.

Our first order of business was to change the name of the organization to reflect what it really is--a suburban mobility system. We renamed it the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation. (SMART)

Our second order of business was to implement a hiring freeze and to ban all out-of-state travel for board members and for staff except when they were going to secure federal money. We are making every effort to find new ways to provide effective transportation with the existing resources.

You can expect that we will be meeting with you to share ideas to improve the SMART system.

Now I'd like to switch gears for a minute and discuss another new program which makes us all very proud and that's 9-1-1.

When you think 9-1-1 you think about saving lives.

I'd like to share a short story with you that proves just how valuable this service is.

Just a month after the service was installed, little Danny Kaufman fell off a chair and hit his head on his kitchen floor and lost consciousness.

He was home alone with his baby-sitter when she called 9-1-1. During her panic, the baby-sitter hung up the phone before giving the home address. Because of the enhanced system, which tells where the call came from, a dispatcher was able to call the baby-sitter back and help was en route. Within four minutes of her initial call a fire fighter attended to young Danny.

Now this story has a happy ending, but it has a particularly happy ending for someone in this room, someone you all know--Suzie Singer--because Danny is her nephew.

How I wish every story had a happy ending, but in real life we can only do the best we can for others, and that's what county government is all about.

For the next few moments, I'd like to review some of our county success programs that have helped others.

Last year, I announced that I would form a Senior Citizen's Advisory Council. With your help, I chose a member from each commissioner's district. They have met and are working on determining how the county can best help our older residents.

In my last message, I also told you of my intention to form a Task Force on the Homeless. That too has been done and the task force has now identified three areas of study: emergency and transitional housing, prevention of homelessness, and affordable housing.

I have recently reviewed a report on emergency and transitional housing, will soon analyze the recommendations, and forward resolutions to you which I feel should be implemented.

One of county governments largest area of mandated activity is our health services. They are very important in this county and we do our best to enhance the lives of others.

It's a sad fact that 1 in 11 women contracts breast cancer, but we in Oakland County are doing our best to help women detect it early.

We have expanded our breast cancer detection efforts to include a mobile unit. This unit will be put to full use this year to reach senior citizens,



home-bound residents and women in the work place. For every 1,000 women screened, our cancer detection program diagnosed 15 with breast cancer. Our successful diagnosis rate is more than twice the national rate of 6.8 per 1,000.

As we all know, health care is expensive. In fact, we in county government have experienced spiraling costs. To help contain costs our Risk Manager, Stan Fayne has undertaken a vigorous program of cost containment activities for employees which include:

---self insurance of health care and coordination of benefits, case management and mandatory second opinions regarding surgery.

Just revising these areas will reduce costs by more than \$1 million for 1989.

Now, let's shift away from health care to note our crime fighting efforts.

Looking around the county for new developments we only need to look across the road to see our new jail wing completed and ready to house prisoners.

We also can point to the installation of in-car terminals in local police departments as an aid in fighting crime. This project was a joint effort by local police agencies, the County Executive and the Board of Commissioners. The project, which will be fully operational by late summer, will provide a state-of-the-art law enforcement data base access directly from patrol cars. The terminals will be used by more than 40 local police and law enforcement agencies in Oakland County. By using these terminals police officials have better results in tracking down stolen vehicles and have greater access to security information.

Before I close, I would like to address one final item--and that is the issue of Home Rule for Oakland County--a county charter.

You have all probably read or heard that I favor the adoption of the county charter. This is not a new position.

It is the position I have held for at least 10 years, because I believe that corrections and improvements need to be made in the way our government is structured. This will remain a priority of mine.

When we will act on it is not yet determined. We are gathering information and you can be assured when we feel the time is appropriate we will communicate with the board about the subject.

Looking ahead to 1989, I'd like to reflect on some remarks President Bush made in his inaugural speech. He said, "We need compromise. We have had dissension. We need harmony. We have had a chorus of discordant voices."

This administration, like our new president, stands ready to accept the approach of the offered hand and to work closely with the Board of Commissioners and all of the elected officials and the agencies in county government. We want to work for a more harmonious relationship which can only be more productive for our citizens.

This does not mean that we need to agree on everything. But I will assure you, as the executive of this county, that when we find it necessary to disagree we can do so without being disagreeable.

As you look back at what we've accomplished in the past year and look forward to the year ahead, if you look to each of these issues or programs--9-1-1, the Task Force on the Homeless or the new addition to the county jail, they all have been measured and exist in order to maintain and improve the quality of life we enjoy in Oakland County.

Because in the final analysis, where we are 50 or 100 years from now depends on how carefully we pay attention to the quality of life we, in this county, enjoy today.

Thank you.