

Economic development grant will finance rebuilding of road

Yanfeng expansion spurs \$1.6M state transportation award

By Frank DeFrank

frank.defrank@macombdaily.com
@fdefrank on Twitter

The ambitious expansion plans of a Harrison Township automotive firm led to Macomb County receiving a grant to rebuild an industrial subdivision road.

County officials announced this week they've received \$1.6 million in state Transportation Development Funds to finance construction of Executive Drive, a one-mile long street near Interstate-94 and Joy Boulevard. The funds are administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The grant came about through a complex collaboration among the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development, Yanfeng USA Automotive Trim Systems in Harrison Township, MDOT and the Macomb County Department of Roads.

Yanfeng, which established its first location in Harrison Township in 2010, decided to expand and promised to invest \$56.6 million to renovate a previously vacant building on Executive Drive. The expansion is expected to create 519 jobs over the next years. Yanfeng currently employs about 130 workers, county planning officials said.

"This is probably our largest (expansion) this year with the number of (expected new) employees," said Camille Silda, se-



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A plan to expand Yanfeng USA Automotive Trim helped spur the state grant to rebuild Executive Drive.

nior economic development specialist for the county planning department.

"This expansion will be a significant investment to our headquarters here in Harrison Township," added David Wang, company president. "This is going to dramatically improve the appearance and functionality of our operations."

Yanfeng's decision to expand within Macomb County triggered the grant. The money, coupled with about \$700,000 in matching road department funds, will finance reconstruction of the road.

"This is great news for Harrison Township, and I am excited at the new job opportunities this will create," Republi-

can State Rep. Anthony Forlini of Harrison Township said in a release Wednesday. "Executive Drive is important to our community and to local industry because it leads to the only industrial property in the township. The businesses located on Executive Drive provide jobs to local workers and revenue for Harrison Township, which are vital to the economic growth of the township."

Executive Drive, the industrial road that serves Yanfeng and other companies in the industrial park, is in an extreme state of disrepair, according to transportation officials. The road does not drain properly, causing icy conditions in the winter and flooding during heavy rain-

falls. The Macomb County Department of Roads will reconstruct Executive Drive between Henry B. Joy Boulevard and Production Drive, as well as widen the intersections at these roadways to allow the companies improved access.

"It is in bad condition," said Robert Hoepfner, director of the Macomb County Department of Roads. "... It needs to be replaced.

"We're going to tear it all out and put a whole new pavement in."

Hoepfner said a date to start construction has not been determined.

Macomb Daily Staff Writer Erica Stark contributed to this report.