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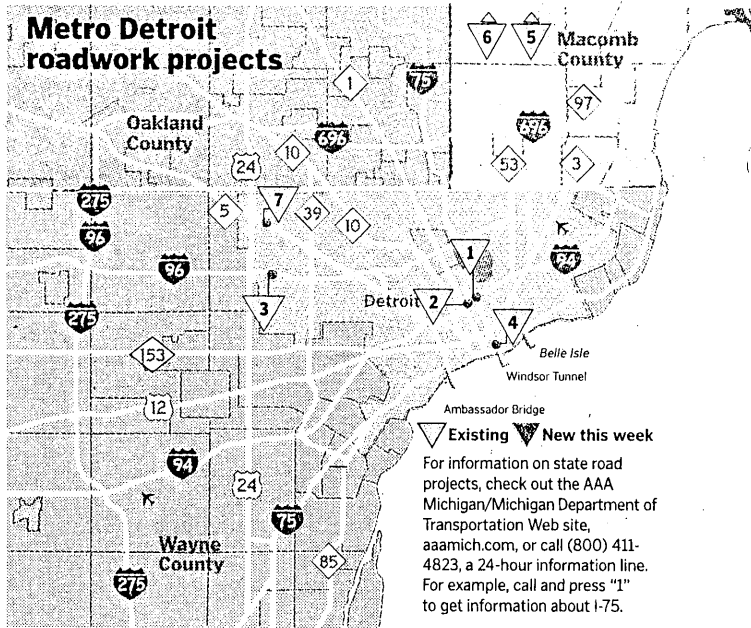
Anti-theft plan puts heat on car thieves

TOM GREENWOOD
COMMUTING



The rest of the nation could take a lesson from Michigan when it comes to "leaving that Lexus alone!"

For the sixth straight year, auto thefts in Michigan — and within Detroit — have declined even though they've risen throughout the rest of the United States. The good news comes from the Auto Theft Prevention Authority and HEAT (Help Eliminate Auto Thefts), an association that's in partnership with auto insurance com-



- I-75**
 1 The northbound and southbound I-75 exit ramps to eastbound I-94 are closed until April.
- I-94**
 2 The John R ramp to westbound I-94 is closed.
- I-96**
 3 Eastbound I-96 ramps to and from Outer Drive are closed until late February. Also, the entrance ramp from westbound I-96 to Outer Drive is closed.
- I-375**
 4 One lane of southbound I-375 and the south-

- bound ramp at Madison Street remain are closed through mid-February.
- M-53 (Van Dyke)**
 5 Intermittent lane closures along M-53 from 28 Mile to 33 Mile through September.
- 6 22 Mile over M-53 is closed.
- M-5 (Grand River)**
 7 Eastbound Grand River traffic over the Rouge River is expected to be detoured through the spring.

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panies, law enforcement and residents of Michigan to fight auto theft.

The HEAT program encourages citizen action through a confidential, toll-free auto theft tip line, (800) 242-HEAT, that gives rewards to people who provide information leading to the arrest and prosecution of thieves, carjackers and those who supply and run chop shops.

The numbers for 2002 (numbers for 2003 aren't yet available) show auto thefts in Michigan dropped by 5.85 percent, compared to a nationwide increase of 1.6 percent. In 2002, 49,248 vehicles were reported stolen in Michigan, compared with 52,310 in 2001.

In Detroit, automobile thefts dropped from 24,537 in 2001 to 23,857 in 2002. Overall, Michigan represented 3.95 percent of U.S. auto thefts in 2002, which is the lowest percentage since 1995.

Among Michigan's larger cities, declines in auto theft were reported in: Flint, from 1,965 in 2001 to 1,342 in 2002; Grand Rapids, from 677 to 673 in 2002; Lansing, from 483 in 2001 to 407 in 2002; Battle Creek, from 331 in 2001 to 285 in 2002; and Dearborn, from 1,176 in 2001 to 937 in 2002.

More declines: Southfield, from 828 to 795 in 2002; and Saginaw, from 403 in 2001 to 380 in 2002.

Prizewinning potholes

Detroit News columnist Tom Greenwood is looking for the biggest, baddest potholes in Metro Detroit. To nominate a particularly nasty crater, e-mail Tom at commuter@detnews.com; call (313) 222-2023; or write him at The Detroit News, 615 W. Lafayette, Detroit, MI 48226. Be sure to include a detailed description and location of the pothole, and send a photo if you like.

But there were a couple of notable spikes in the statistics, as auto thefts rose in two of Michigan's larger cities. In Warren, there were 1,148 thefts in 2002, up from 1,118 in 2001, and in Kalamazoo, thefts rose from 483 in 2001 to 596 in 2002.

"Michigan residents are more aware than ever about the need to protect their vehicles from becoming targets for criminals, and law enforcement is more focused than ever on cracking down on theft activity," said Terri Miller, director of HEAT.

"Thanks to resources like the HEAT tip line, Michigan residents are more empowered than ever to report

criminal activity and help recover stolen property."

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Michigan cars may be sticking around longer, but the same can't be said for Michigan residents.

According to the 36th annual magnet states report from Allied Van Lines, Michigan is the third-highest "outbound" state when it comes to loss of residents. Allied, which bases its findings on the number of moves it makes into, out of and within states, reports that Illinois is the No. 1 outbound state, followed by Oklahoma, Michigan and New Jersey.

The movement out of these states most likely can be blamed on the economy, according to the survey. The magnet state attracting the largest percentage of inbound residents? Vermont, followed by Alaska, Montana, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Vermont? I thought it was because of all those Ben & Jerry's ice cream stores, but once again, Allied said it's because of Vermont's strong economy. The states with the largest amounts of intrastate moves were listed as California, Texas and Florida.

Allied based its findings on 199,000 moves in 2003, with the survey providing information on the nation's moving trends and relocation patterns.

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