

Lamorinda's Big Dig

EBMUD Pipeline Project to Close Moraga Road this Summer

By Cathy Tyson

Plans are moving forward with the 17,500 feet of 36" diameter pipeline to be installed from the Lafayette Water Treatment Plant to the corner of Moraga Road and Draeger Drive in Moraga.

The existing original pipeline was built in 1930; some of it was replaced in 1947 back when the population of Lamorinda was a fraction of what it is today. The new pipeline will expand capacity to serve Moraga and Lafayette now and in the future, improving water delivery reliability and maintaining water quality for portions of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.

Moraga Road from Old Jonas Hill Road to Sky Hy Drive will be closed to through traffic from 9:00 to 5:30 for approximately six to eight weeks. The sections of Moraga Road with four lanes will have one lane open in each direction for the duration of the construction. Keeping Moraga Road open for the majority of morning commuters, when traffic is most dense was a priority of EBMUD.

Construction is tentatively scheduled to start on June 15 and be completed by August 15.

The powers that be at EBMUD anticipate a "manageable traffic impact," with the majority of outbound Moraga traffic detoured to St. Mary's Road. However this may not be the only construction project going on in the area this

summer.

According to Janet Keeter, Orinda City Manager, Orinda is moving forward with its \$2.7 million dollar paving project for Moraga Way. At the December 18th City Council meeting, it is anticipated that the project will be authorized to go out to bid with two scheduling scenarios; moving it up to April and May, along with a scenario for the summer months. A federal grant for \$1 million of the \$2.7 million dollar project has time restrictions, so those are the only two scheduling options available.

Moraga has a paving project of its own. The Town will receive \$540,000 in funding from the Pavement Rehabilitation Program with the stipulation that it be spent before the end of the 2008 – 2009 fiscal year. Moraga is required to contribute matching funds of at least \$150,000 and any additional difference between the bid and the grant, according the Public Works Director/Town Engineer Jill Mercurio. EBMUD's big dig in Moraga needs to be complete prior to this paving project.

No one argues that the pipeline isn't needed, but the impacts will be felt beyond a longer commute. Bus route 106, which is a circular loop throughout Lamorinda on what will be closed roads, will definitely be adjusted. Mary Burdick, Marketing Department Manager

of County Connection said, "At the moment it's very premature, and there are going to be periods of delay, but EMBUD is doing whatever it can to mitigate the situation."

Many environmental groups as well as neighbors were concerned about loss of trees. Responding to these worries, EBMUD will replace any protected tree, like a valley oak or a coast live oak, on a 3:1 basis with native trees of the same species. Non-native trees will be replaced on a 1:1 basis.

The Soda Aquatic Center at Campolindo High School is usually busy all summer long with swim lessons, swim teams and water polo. Aquatic Coordinator for the Acalanes Union High School District, Andrew Morris said, "It's an unfortunate situation. We'll make slight adjustments to the schedule, but the majority of our events are on Saturdays and Sundays." He continues, "The majority of our renters will feel the brunt of it, Orinda Aquatic, Lamorinda Water Polo and Roughing It Day Camp," among others.

Finally, some have suggested, delayed commuters might be speeding through Burton Valley to make up for the, with any luck, few extra minutes they've been stuck in traffic. Lafayette Police are well aware of the situation. In addition the City of Lafayette is negotiating with EBMUD for additional funds for flaggers to help keep traffic moving through busy intersections.