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Summer Road Closures: Residents Still Have a Lot of Questions

By Sophie Braccini

“How will I get to my house on Madrone during the closure?” “Will I get my mail?” “Will there be a flagger at Bollinger?” “Will emergency vehicles be able to pass through the work?”

These were just a few of the pertinent questions asked by anxious Lamorinda residents during the public meeting held by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) on April 10th regarding the public work that will significantly disrupt traffic on both Moraga Road and Moraga Way over the summer.

EBMUD is engaged in a countywide renovation of its infrastructure, plants, pumping stations and pipes. The work that will have the biggest impact on our communities, starting this spring, is the replacement of the piping that runs from the Lafayette Reservoir to Moraga along Moraga Road. The work will involve the complete closure of Moraga Road from south of Old Jonas Hill Road to north of Sky-Hy Drive from June 16th to August 22nd during week days, 9AM to 5:30PM. At roughly the same time, the city of Orinda will repave Moraga Way, working mainly at night but still restricting traffic to one lane in localized areas.

The seventy people who attended the meeting could be divided in two categories: those who live in one of the 63 residences that will need direct access to the closed portion of Moraga Road, and other locals worried about the impact of traffic on adjacent roads.

Bill Hossfeld, a Moraga resident, is the EBMUD Moraga Road Project Manager. He responded to most of the questions, along with representatives of Mountain Cascade Inc., the General Engineering contractor who will do the work.

“Will I be able to get out of my house at 11 o’clock in the morning?” asked a Moraga Road resident. “Yes,” answered Hossfeld, “residents in the closed area will get placards to put on their cars to get access.” However, entry will be granted only in one direction at a given time, either uphill or downhill, depending on where the work is located. “Since getting in and out will be disruptive to the crews; the more you do it when they are in front of your house, the longer it will take them,” he added.

Residents of the area had concerns about their mail delivery, as well as trash collection and other services. Nora Harlow, the public interface liaison for EBMUD who is working with local agencies, indicated that discussions are ongoing.

Most in attendance were residents living in the areas that are going to be greatly impacted by the diverted traffic. The two alternative routes to Moraga Road are Rheem South-East / Saint Mary’s and further up, Reliez Station toward Olympic Blvd, or Rheem West / Acalanes Road toward Lafayette and Glorietta toward Moraga Way.

“Getting on St Mary’s Rd from Bollinger Canyon is already challenging. With increased traffic it will be more difficult, but you are not planning to post a flagger there. Why?” asked a concerned resident.

Hossfeld explained that nine flaggers will be working along St Mary’s Road and Reliez Station Rd, at critical junctions, to regulate and speed traffic. “That’s the plan right now,” he added, “we will be listening and adapt to the real conditions. Do not hesitate to contact us if problems



Road sign on Moraga Road in Lafayette

Photo Sophie Braccini

are worse than what we anticipate.”

Harlow, who is also a Lamorinda resident, has the dubious distinction of being the go-to person for problem reports; she can be reached at 510-287-0140 or nharlow@ebmud.com.

General concerns from the public involved the quality and disruption of the water supply, how quickly the roads would be repaved and emergency access. EBMUD responded that the quality of water would not decrease, that there would be no disruption of the water supply except for a two-hour shutdown in one area, and that the roads would be promptly repaved, ongoing, within ten days.

“The population needs to know that emergency response time will be impacted” during the closures, said Moraga Police Chief Mark Ruppenthal.

“Emergency vehicles will have access at all time,” stated Mike Nelson from Mountain Cascade, “only part of the roads are closed, all you have to do is to ask the foreman to move the vehicles that are working on the road out of the way.” Harlow confirmed, “We are working with the Fire Districts and dispatching.”

For those who will need to use alternate routes, it might be a good idea to check them out in advance. On May 19, the contractor plans to begin trenching and installing pipe, starting near Sky-Hy Drive and working south, stopping shy of Campolindo. This section of pipeline work will require alternating one-way traffic, weekdays from 9am to 2:30pm. Repaving on Moraga Way should start around the same time.

All stakeholders recommend that you check web sites that will be constantly updated, recommending better routes and exactly locating the disruptions. Go to <http://www.ebmud.com/> and click on Moraga Road Pipeline Project Update.