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Warning: Road Work this Summer on Moraga Road

By *Sophie Braccini*

Sound familiar? Not to worry, the traffic this summer on Moraga Road will not look like it did in 2008. It will, however, bear some resemblance as the public works departments in Moraga and possibly Lafayette are planning to patch and seal the popular route.

Last summer saw a big traffic challenge, as the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) disemboweled Moraga Road to add an additional much needed water pipeline. Residents may remember the road closure and flaggers on the alternate routes; the resulting congestion was not as bad as we feared.

So what will happen? Three projects should hit the streets concomitantly. In Lafayette, the town is contemplating cap sealing the portion between Rimrock Road and the city limit (Sky Hy Dr.) The most unpleasant part for us drivers is that Moraga Rd is very narrow there and that the best solution for expedient work is to close the road. According to Matt Luttropp, Lafayette Associate Engineer, this work shouldn't take more than three days.

In Moraga the work will be divided into two much more involved projects. First a rehabilitation of Moraga Road between Sky Hy and Buckingham Drive, then the resurfacing of the artery between Buckingham and Draeger. Why two projects and not one? In a word: financing.

The work on the first section that will be excavated, repaired and then completely re-covered is financed by a \$540,000 grant from STP (Federal Surface Transportation Program). Jill Mercurio, Moraga Publics Work Director, just got Caltrans' approval to start bidding the project. "I wanted to be able to start the work before the stimulus packet money arrives," she explains, "that will give us a chance at getting a better pricing since contractors will still be hungry." This project should start mid June and be finished within eight weeks.

To complete the work, Mercurio will use Federal stimulus money. This second part is the resurfacing of the Buckingham to Draeger section with a sealant that contains recycled tires. It will include digging and repairs as well. Mercurio said that the rubberized sealant has been applied successfully on local roads such as Canyon Road and Highway 24.

The stimulus package money will not cover the entire cost, so Mercurio obtained an additional grant from the California Integrated Waste Management Board because the sealant uses recycled tires, and EBMUD contributes to the envelope because the Town's resurfacing saved them some road repairs. The project should hit the road mid July and last 6-8 weeks.

Moraga does not plan to close the road. However, major road work does disrupt traffic, even when it is limited to 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., when this work will delay traffic (8 to 4 for the portion of work that will not delay traffic). Mercurio says that warning signals will be posted at major intersections in advance of the project so residents can choose alternate routes.

The icing on the cake? Mercurio also says that Orinda is not planning any significant work on Moraga Way at the same time.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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