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Rheem Boulevard Road Closure Coming Soon

By Sophie Braccini

The deplorable state of Rheem Boulevard in Moraga is no secret. The heavily damaged section of roadway between St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road is in constant use by Saint Mary's students, Campolindo students living in the Bluffs and the Burton Valley area of Lafayette, and many other residents.

Road maintenance funds being scarce, major repairs happen whenever grant funds come along, such as now - repairs to Rheem Blvd. are scheduled to start within a few weeks and will focus on the two ends of that section of the road; the middle section will require a complete dig-out and will not be touched at this time. The project is scheduled to last for 20 working days and should begin in late May; it must be completed by the end of June under the terms of the grant. Changeable signs indicating when the road will be closed will be posted around the area and on Rheem Blvd itself two weeks prior to the beginning of the work. The contractor is allowed to completely close the roadway only between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

The Town of Moraga recently approved a significant housing development plan, Rancho Laguna, along Rheem Blvd. Is it a good idea to repair a road that could be damaged by heavy equipment in the near future? "We had funds that needed to be used this fiscal year, and Rheem was the best candidate, given that we already had the project designed and basically ready to bid," said Town Manager Jill Keimach, "We considered the impacts to the new roadway from the Rancho Laguna construction, and felt that the new roadway would hold up much better than the existing pavement during the construction of the development."

Jill Mercurio, Moraga Town Engineer and Public Works Director, added that there is no guarantee as to when work on the development will start, which compounds a second issue: the most compromised part of Rheem Blvd. is the one adjacent to the development site; since the repair project does not include this very dangerous segment, drivers will have to be cautious once this spring's repairs are complete. "Coming from Saint Mary's some drivers might pick up speed - neighbors already complain that people are too fast as it is. It may be that more law enforcement will be needed," said Mercurio.

The conditions of approval for the development of Rancho Laguna include the repair of that section of the boulevard. "We really need to dig out the road and repair under it and when that happens, the road will be closed because we will have to dig 30 feet under it and there will be no road," noted Mercurio.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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