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Orinda's TSAC Re-Examines Congestion on Moraga Way

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The heavy traffic on Moraga Way has been a subject of concern in Lamorinda since the 1980s. This major thoroughfare adjoins the highway and is utilized by commuting residents of both Orinda and Moraga. It also borders the Orinda Union School District (OUSD) and the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD). During morning rush hour, bumper to bumper traffic frustrates commuters and students alike.

Despite five studies that have focused on traffic flow in the area, congestion continues to be a problem. On April 26 of this year, Orinda's Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) began to readdress the issue during the "Moraga Way Traffic Community Workshop." During the workshop, community members gathered with representatives from OUSD and AUHSD, TSAC chair Steve Schnier and City Councilmember and TSAC liason Sue Severson to communicate continued problems and possible solutions associated with the traffic on Moraga Way.

At last week's City Council meeting, Schnier took the microphone to summarize the workshop results. All workshop attendees felt that the congestion on Moraga Way was problematic and hazardous, he said, explaining that traffic often moves well under the speed limit, and residential side streets fill up with rushing commuters and high school students. Orinda has implemented improvements in crosswalks, traffic signals, sidewalks and bicycle lanes to help combat these issues. However, Schnier noted, these advances have not yet succeeded in reducing complaints.

Schnier and Orinda's on-call Traffic Engineer Robert Rees presented several new solutions to the City Council. Most notably, workshop attendees noted a significant decrease in traffic on Wednesday mornings, when Del Rey Elementary School, Orinda Intermediate School and Miramonte High School have staggered school bell schedules. Schnier and Rees therefore proposed that the schools discuss purposely staggering schedules on the other weekdays. Other ideas included encouraging carpools, establishing a different drop-off point for Miramonte students, investigating the use of school and County Connection buses and improving sidewalks to promote safe pedestrian travel to and from schools.

Council members responded thoroughly and positively to the ideas presented by Schnier and Rees. The Council then asked TSAC to begin investigating the proposed solutions by contacting community groups including the parents' clubs and principals of Del Rey, Orinda Intermediate, and Miramonte High School. TSAC members will present the Council with the results of their inquiries in three to four month's time.

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