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Moraga Roads at Risk

By Sophie Braccini



This June, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) released The Pot Hole Report: Can the Bay Area Have Better Roads? And the results for Moraga concur with what Moraga's Public Works Director, Jill Mercurio, and RECON (Revenue Enhancement Community Outreach to Neighborhoods) have been saying for a long time: Moraga needs to act now to protect its road system. If nothing is done in the next ten years, Moraga roads will downgrade from a worrisome 'at risk' today to a very costly 'poor' in the not so distant future.

"MTC uses the average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of each Bay Area city to classify them," explains Mercurio, "Moraga falls in the before last category, 'at risk' (PCI 50-59) along with Martinez, Oakland and East Palo Alto, and just before the 'poor' category (PCI 25-49), where only five Bay Area communities fall into, including our neighbor, Orinda." For the Director the real danger is in delayed maintenance and the exponential cost of road repair.

"We use a computer model that takes into account the state of the roads and evaluates how they will perform in the coming years, depending on the type of maintenance measure we are able to apply," says Mercurio. With the budget she has now, the Public Works Director and her team patch the pot holes and seal the superficial layer of the road, but there is nothing they can do for the

structure itself.

"We think of roads as the coating that protects the dirt, when in fact what makes it is the sub-base," explains Mercurio, who is also the Town Engineer.

There are geological phenomenons in Moraga that directly impact the base of the roads. When a road is located on a hill, water can run underneath the asphalt that serves as a dam. If there is no sub-drainage system in place, the base underneath the road can subside and a sink hole is formed.

Additionally, as time passes, sun rays evaporate some of the oil that makes the coating of the road and it becomes brittle. When roads start cracking, rain gets into the cracks, which can degrade the base.

Mercurio acknowledges that residents notice the condition of large roads, such as Moraga Way and Moraga Road, which are categorized as arterials and can receive State or Federal funding for repair. She calls attention to the neighborhood roads that do not qualify for these programs. "As everybody else, we have delayed maintenance," she notes, "we are now at a point where we can save it (Moraga's roads network); in 10 years we won't be able to." Today only 6% of the neighborhood roads are in 'poor' condition right now but if nothing is done, according to Mercurio's road maintenance program, after 10 years that figure will rise to 72%.

In Orinda, the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission indicated in its annual report at the beginning of the year that "...the future burden of deferred maintenance will grow while our roads continue to deteriorate....The recent report, by Harris and Associates, projects that under currently budgeted levels of spending, the dollar value of deferred maintenance will increase from \$28 million in 2010 to \$43 million in 2014."

Mercurio expresses hope that the cost of fixing her backlog never reaches this height.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission's report is available online at http://www.mtc.ca.gov/library/pothole_report/Pothole_Report_2011.pdf.

The roads in Moraga that are in need of serious repair:

Bollinger Canyon between St. Mary's Road and Joseph - PCI of 16

Via Granada between Moraga Road and Calle la Mesa - PCI of 16 (before the road developed a sinkhole and the Town repaired a large portion)

Larch between Lynch Court and Dickenson - PCI of 12

Larch between Lynch Court and Windeler Court - PCI of 22

Calle la Mesa between Campolindo Drive and Corte Yolanda - PCI of 25

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