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Weighing Options for Future Road Repair

By Cathy Tyson

Since voters have not been able to pass a road repair tax of any sort for the last ten years, although they've come close, Lafayette city staff did a complete analysis of current and future road issues and is asking the Capital Projects Assessment Committee (CPAC) for guidance as options are weighed, at a meeting on December 8, for the next cycle of the Capital Improvement Program.

Although Lafayette can boast that their roads are not nearly as bad as Orinda's, the city projects that there will be 81 failed streets by the end of 2012 that will cost \$13.4 million to repair.

It's the City's practice to look at road projects through a Five Year Capital Improvement Program to prioritize how and when to spend money on maintenance and renewal of infrastructure. The process to prioritize which roads will be repaired is not random; a Pavement Maintenance Strategy has been in place for years. "Timely application of appropriate treatment to pavement has long been demonstrated as the best means to maintain overall quality of a road system and to minimize the aggregate cost of system maintenance and repair," wrote City Engineer Tony Coe in a staff report for the upcoming meeting.

Some residents have questioned this process - wondering if money devoted to maintaining roads in good condition could be more fairly spent to repair failed roads. It's been a city practice for more than fifteen years that not keeping up good roads creates a maintenance backlog that snowballs over time - ultimately adding more failed roads to the bottom line.

The task at hand for the CPAC is to find answers to three important questions spelled out in the staff report: Should the City continue its current strategy of maintaining roads in good condition while such a large failed roads backlog persists? Should the City Council release the \$3 million from the General Fund that it had earmarked for Measure G - if it had passed? What are some alternative strategies to prevent low priority failed roads from becoming an immediate burden on City's resources?

The CPAC meeting on December 8 is open to the public; it will be held at the Lafayette City Offices, 7:00 p.m., 3675 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Room 265. For residents with other plans that evening, be aware that CPAC only acts in an advisory capacity and will present its findings to the City Council in late January or early February.

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