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More Spending on Road Repair Expected

By Cathy Tyson

The usually financially conservative Lafayette City Council has indicated it is willing to open up purse strings a bit to address road repair. In the aftermath of last years' failure of Measure G, the parcel tax for road repair, it appears not enough residents have an appetite to tax themselves, so the city needs to find another way to solve the problem. Road maintenance budgeting is spelled out in the five year Capital Improvement Program or CIP. Twice a year, city staff updates the CIP, looking at current projections of revenue and infrastructure needs and runs it by other city boards for review before the final version is presented to the City Council for adoption.

A number of options have appeared to improve the road repair budget outlook, noted in the most recent CIP update. There was a Goal Setting Workshop in January, it was there that the City Council was supportive of allocating an additional \$400,000 per year toward road repair - the same amount that is collected as the Waste Management mitigation fee anticipated every year. Tony Coe, Engineering Services Manager, recommended in a recent staff report that "it would be financially feasible for the City to continue that allocation for the entire five-year cycle." Coe projects \$14.4 million available for capital funding over the next five years. Historically contributions from the General Fund, gas tax, and Measure J sales tax total \$1.7 million every year to the Capital Improvement Program that goes toward road and drain repair. Add to that the \$400,000 from Waste Management fees to total \$2.1 funding annually - enough to pay for a fair amount of asphalt.

Recommendations by the Road Funding Task Force and CPAC, the Capital Projects Assessment Committee, also encourage the City Council to transfer at least \$3 million from the General Fund Reserve account, which was originally pledged as a contribution if Measure G passed, into a special sinking fund for capital improvement to be used over three years.

Throw in a couple of grant awards expected in 2013 to fund pavement management work, traffic median and streetlight installations on Mt. Diablo, and the road repair situation in Lafayette is looking more manageable. That would be the good news, however the bad news is there's still approximately a \$15 million road and drain repair backlog and 81 failed residential roads. Three recommendations from CPAC were recently adopted by the City Council: continue the current pavement management strategy, increase funding to address the backlog of failed roads, and implement a stopgap strategy on certain roads to stretch their useful life. That's excellent news for the families living on the ten-street list for the Stopgap Chip Seal Program that kicks off in 2013, starting with Buckeye Court and Fiora Place.

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