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## Manzanita Bridge Replacement Project Moves Forward

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Following a public hearing July 17 to consider the planned replacement of a crumbling bridge near the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) Orinda Water Treatment Plant, the Orinda City Council adopted the initiative's proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, and voted 4-0 to authorize staff to open the construction bidding process for the project (Council Member Sue Severson was absent).

Council members and staff recalled the amount of time and effort involved in getting this project approved by various review authorities. Public Works Director Chuck Swanson observed, "It's finally come to this.... I think we have everything ready to go."

Vice Mayor Amy Worth noted that the project is part of the larger effort to repair and upgrade all of California's bridges statewide.

Constructed over San Pablo Creek in 1937, Manzanita Bridge is now seismically unsafe with a deck located within a flood zone. When completed, the new structure will be 15 feet wider and 12 feet longer. According to the 170-page staff report, its replacement will "alleviate hydraulic, structural and alignment deficiencies, provide a five-foot higher elevation to avoid flooding and improve flood water flow, and provide a pedestrian sidewalk on one side of the bridge."

But, because this upgrade has such potential to harm wildlife - including the California red-legged frog, Alameda whipsnake, western pond turtle, dusky-footed woodrat, special status birds and bats, and the yellow-legged frog - planning has crept along at a banana slug's pace. Nearly 50 general and specific "Avoidance and Minimization Efforts" for just these animals alone have been spelled out over five pages of the "Manzanita Drive Bridge Replacement Project Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration," along with further measures to preserve trees and jurisdictional waters. Additionally, rock slope protection and landscaping are planned to limit erosion. Work will initially involve construction of a one-lane bridge, asphalt concrete roadway, and grading and drainage - all temporary to provide a detour route in preparation for the removal of the existing bridge. In addition to creating a sturdier structure a chemical transfer line will be installed, for which the City will share the cost with the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

The Mitigated Negative Declaration stipulates that "all work in the creek must be done in the 'dry months' with all construction in the creek between April 15 and October 15. The current estimated work duration for the entire project is 180 working days and will likely occur over a period of two years."

Swanson indicated that he anticipates bringing a recommended project bid back for Council's approval by mid-September.

City personnel have secured State grant funding to cover \$2,479,198 of the project's estimated \$3,022,653 cost, which is expected to cover 1.25 acres of temporary and replacement bridge sites, roadways, and landscape areas.

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