

Published September 26th, 2012

City Infrastructure 101, Chinese Delegates Explore Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



City Manager Steve Falk explains the development of Lafayette Photo Andy Scheck

Lafayette's City Engineer Tony Coe, who joined the visitors exploring the city, speaks Mandarin. Called the birthplace of Chinese civilization because of its 5,000 years of history, Henan Province is the second most populous Chinese state with over 103 million people. Two important railways run through much of the province, the Jingguang and Longhai Railways. There's an active effort to continue to build on the economy of the province encouraging transportation and manufacturing.

A group of 14 Chinese government officials from the transportation department of Henan Province, lead by Mr. Zhang Changliu, Deputy Director, Charge Repayment Highway Management Center, recently took a tour of Lafayette. The international visitors are part of the SAG Economic and Technical Exchange Development Program that seeks to build economic ties and share ideas. They selected Lafayette to learn about city planning; they will also be visiting the California Department of Transportation, better known as CalTrans, and the California Highway Patrol.

The dignitaries were hoping to gather information on short- and long-term transportation challenges at the city level, along with federal, state and local transportation funding - specifically how that works. Because of the rapid development of the economy of their province, they were curious about infrastructure issues like the life cycle of a street and Lafayette's five year capital improvement plans.

"They were just charming," said Planning and Building Services Manager Niroop Srivatsa, who explained they were surprised to learn that voters have to approve funding for transit systems like BART. The group had a translator; and

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