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## The Slings and Arrows of Orinda's Roads Orinda debates how best to allocate sales tax funds

By Laurie Snyder

To pave or not to pave? That is the question. Whether to use Measure L funds to raise a few of Orinda's worst side roads up from lunar landscape status to good Pavement Condition Indexes (PCIs) - or to prevent a greater number of less axle-jarring byways from further fragmentation - that is the headache defined.

The Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission has wrestled with this since voters hiked the sales tax by one-half percent in November. The grappling continued in earnest at the April 16 Orinda City Council meeting as the commission proposed its Policy and Criteria for Selecting Streets for Repair Using Measure L Sales Tax Funds. "Even with this additional funding," reads the report, "current budgetary constraints and the poor and deteriorating condition of Orinda's roads require the City to apply budgeted funds only to those roads where the most benefit for the most residents can be obtained."

The CIOC report outlines two sets of standards. The first-Criteria for Developing the 10-Year Program for Measure L Funds- would create a road renovation list for update every two years. To be rehabilitated, street segments must be classified as residential, have a StreetSaver program PCI calculated as 15 or less, and be among the more heavily used residential roads with a minimum daily traffic volume of at least 300 vehicles as verified by actual traffic counts. Under the Biennial Program for Measure L Funds, streets would "be drawn from the list of road segments [updated annually] in the 10-year program," and "fairly distributed among the neighborhoods of the City of Orinda." Nearly 20 Orindans - mostly residents of Lost Valley, which has a PCI of 16 - voiced concerns. Several came armed with road condition photos and traffic count data; one posted video footage on YouTube (to view, search for "2012 Road Survey PCI" at youtube.com).

"I'm heartened to know that we're looking at objective data," said resident Jonathan Myers, who urged that pedestrian safety be added to benchmarks. With Lost Valley's poor roads and considerable volume of pedestrian traffic, he said, there is "a lot of opportunity for people to get hurt." Elizabeth O'Shea asked whether consultants or staff conduct PCI surveys, and suggested that the biennial criteria needed to be fleshed out further.

Vince and Janet Maiorana questioned the validity of the criteria, presenting data that roughly 66 percent of Lost Valley Drive "is classified as Very Poor with no road life left." Others spoke of gravelly spots on blind curves, veering cars, and perilous patches traversed gingerly by hikers, bicyclists, and walkers. Terming his road "a failed street," Jim Fleming added that one road considered for Measure L repairs - Zander Drive - "is like a superhighway compared to Lost Valley." He argued that Lost Valley merits attention since it is the only point of ingress and egress, and is an EVA (Emergency Vehicle Access road).

In response, council member Sue Severson empathized but counseled that other areas such as Charles Hill also need work. Each council member asked staff and CIOC chair Dennis Fay probing questions, including how PCIs are calculated and by whom, why 300 was the minimum daily traffic volume chosen, why pedestrian safety did not seem to be a weighting factor, and whether or not there is a standard policy on how traffic counts are done.

"We thought about safety, we looked at pedestrians," said Fay, who explained that the CIOC was hoping to help create objective and consistent standards. "There were many criteria considered, many weightings.... In the end, we opted for something simple."

At deliberation's end, the council directed the CIOC to take resident concerns into account when fine-tuning the criteria before returning for further review. To get a head start and be ready to start construction as soon as possible, council members also authorized staff to begin the bid process for hiring the consultants who will assist with engineering design for 2014 Measure L and Annual Paving projects with contracts to be reviewed by early June. To better understand how these actions may affect your neighborhood, listen to the April 16 audio on the city's website and attend future CIOC meetings.

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