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Orinda City Council Approves Lists of Residential Roads for Repair

By Laurie Snyder

Robert Duvall's character may have loved the smell of napalm during his "Apocalypse Now" mornings, but in Orinda, it's the smell of asphalt in the summer that gets the hearts of locals pumping. In very short order, that pungent aroma of progress is about to begin wafting in earnest thanks to recent decisions by the Orinda City Council and Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission (CIOC) specifying which roads will be the first to receive attention under two programs - the Fiscal Year 2014 Measure L Pavement Reconstruction Project and the FY2014 Pavement Reconstruction Project.

The latter of the two - the city's ongoing pavement maintenance program - is funded through Measure J Return to Source and Gas Tax monies. According to the staff report, the plan for this program "consists of performing as much preventive maintenance as possible, using appropriate types of base failure repairs and reconstructing selected roads based on available funding sources." The list of streets covered, which was initially approved by the CIOC in November, has since been modified to account for the possibility of grant funding to support the paving of Ivy Drive (north) from Ardith Drive to Moraga Way, and to also provide for roughly \$200,000 in paving on other roads. CIOC members expressed their belief that the city may be able to expend additional dollars because contractors have recently been submitting repair bids at as much as 30 percent less than in prior years. However, they did caution that this favorable bidding environment could change.

Two of the areas expected to receive the largest amount of help under this project are Orindawoods Drive from Kite Hill to Altarinda Road and Tara Road from Nonie to Overhill Road. Orindawoods would see its Pavement Condition Index (PCI) rise from 49 to 100 after the work has been completed; the PCI needle on Tara Road would move from 51 to 100.

Other residential streets under consideration for repair via this program could include sections of El Nido Ranch Road, El Toyonal, Glorietta, Rheem Boulevard, and possibly St. Stephens Drive from El Nido to Hidden Valley Road. "It's really important that we get asphalt on the ground," said Mayor Amy Worth.

How About the Measure L Funds?

The first improvements to occur with the funds expected to come in from the sales tax hike approved by Orinda voters in November will likely be to Charles Hill Road from Honey Hill to Soule Road - and to at least two segments of Lost Valley Road leading away from the PG&E station. They are two of the four residential roads with the highest traffic volume for which the city has been able to obtain actual traffic counts, and are also two which have sparked frequent commentary by locals who have regularly advocated for their revitalization at council meetings.

"The primary consideration of the CIOC was that improvements benefit the maximum number of residents and that the roads selected be among the worst residential roads," reads the staff report.

Dennis Fay, CIOC chair, observed that commission members have been refining their criteria for street selection, and will continue to do so as the CIOC develops longer-term recommendations. It is vital for the city to get started on paving as soon as possible not only to take advantage of the current favorable weather, he explained, but to show voters that progress is being made with the Measure L funds they approved.

Both of these lists, which delineate the residential roads most likely to receive attention, are available on the city's website.

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