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To Pave or Not to Pave? Orinda continues to fine tune street selection criteria for Measure L funds

By Laurie Snyder

At their monthly meeting Oct. 3, members of the City of Orinda's Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission continued discussions regarding both what the city's policy should be for prioritizing residential streets for repaving with the community's continued limited repair budget and how best to communicate that policy to Orinda's more than 17,000 residents once that policy is finally approved.

"With the adoption of Measure L," begins the current draft, "the City has an additional source of funds for road repair and reconstruction. This [half cent sales tax] Measure represents the first phase of a multi-year plan to repair all the City's streets. Even with this additional funding, current budgetary constraints and the poor and deteriorating condition of Orinda's roads require the City to apply budgeted funds only to those residential roads where the most benefit for the most residents can be obtained."

Repair prioritization criteria currently under consideration by the CIOC include: residential street segments that are among the most heavily used - based on actual traffic counts - and segments designated among the worst residential roads with a StreetSaver Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of 25 or less with an unacceptable ride quality (with ride quality determined by an appropriate objective measure to be determined). "The road segments will be ranked in descending order of traffic volume, with the highest volume road segments forming a pool of candidate roads" for the annual pavement management program, according to the draft. The timing of underground utility work will also be factored in to minimize the need to dig up and repave up newly repaired streets.

"It may also help us to decide that segments of a road can wait," observed long-time road warrior Dennis Fay as he and his fellow commission members teased out ways to better define the concept of "ride quality." Fay urged that the same automobile should be used by staff each time that ride quality is assessed on any residential roads in order to ensure consistency of the city's measurements. Fay also noted that additional streets are now on the CIOC's radar that had not previously caught the attention of commission members thanks to traffic count studies recently completed by city staff.

Chuck Swanson, public works director, stated that staff hope to have all of those traffic count studies completed by the end of this year. CIOC members decided to continue their fine tuning efforts, and will take another look at the draft Measure L policy at their next meeting in November.

The CIOC also heard from Swanson regarding the progress of other ongoing infrastructure projects. "The Tarabrook drainage project is moving right along. Probably in about two weeks, we'll be done with jacking and boring," said a clearly relieved Swanson.

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[back](#)

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