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Maintaining The Roads

By Sophie Braccini

Moragans are getting used to it: Summer is the time for the Public Works Department to plan for road repairs, as part of the pavement campaign utilizing the 1 percent sales tax increase passed through Measure K in 2012.

This year is the third of the now four-year program funded by the \$7.9 million raised through a bond collected against a portion of the increased sales tax income stream. The 2015 pavement campaign will address 10 street segments that according to Public Works Director Edric Kwan need major reconstruction. Three more of these segments will be paved in 2016 instead of 2015 because utility companies have scheduled work that will impact those segments this year. Kwan would not release this year's list yet because different factors could modify it.

After 2016, the \$7.9 million in secured funds will be gone. What will be left are the non-leveraged funds that are coming in as a result of the 1 percent sales tax, about \$1 million a year. Other sources of funding will continue to come from the state, but they are not guaranteed.

"To sustain our roads at a PCI (pavement condition index) of 60, we will need \$1.6 million a year," said Kwan. "If we want to maintain a PCI of 70 we would need \$2.4 million." The town of Moraga had a PCI of 49 before the pavement campaign started in 2013; it rose to 59 after the first year, to 64 after last year, and the projection is that it will be at 69 by the end of this season's construction. During the first year of the Moraga Road Maintenance Program, 107 road segments in fair condition were addressed. The second year dealt with 28 segments that needed more structural work. This year, 10 segments of extremely damaged streets will be fixed. "We will have to gut them out and redo them," said Kwan. "The contract will include 60 working days just for these 10 segments." Moraga has 439 road segments. A segment can be a whole street if it is relatively small, while a large arterial like Moraga Road has many segments. When the sales tax measure was passed, the town had a road maintenance backlog of more than \$20 million. The money raised against the 1 percent sales tax increase, \$7.9 million, is allowing the Public Works Department to address about half of the neighborhood streets. "We have people calling us saying that they voted for the measure and asking that their street be included in the plan," said Kwan. He explained that he had to strike the right balance and make choices to maximize the return for the entire town.

The achievements so far have earned the department several awards, including the 2014 Best Overall Pavement Management Program award from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "People are trying to learn from what we do," said Kwan with pride. "And I also receive a lot of positive comments on how the town the Moraga has set a new bar when it comes to public outreach."

Kwan said seven contractors showed interest in the 2015 road project when the department went out to bid in March. Once all interested, qualified parties submit a bid, Kwan will select the lowest bidder and will present the contract for approval at the last council meeting in May. "Construction should start by the end of June," he said. Kwan plans to also bring a report to the Moraga Town Council on the pavement conditions and future funding scenarios as a basis for discussion about Moraga streets.

Another Pavement Project This Spring/Summer

SummerHill Homes will close Rheem Boulevard to cross traffic between St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road for 4 to 6 months this construction season to reconstruct the crumbled arterial. "We hope to start the construction in May," said SummerHill Vice President of Development Kevin Ebrahimi. The town needs to approve the plans before the project starts. Town Manager Jill Keimach anticipates that SummerHill will go out to bid by the end of May and that work should start by the end of summer.

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