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## Orinda Roads Plan Discussed

*By Nick Marnell*

At one of Mayor Steve Glazer's last public appearances before he departed for a seat in the state senate, he said that Orinda roads were not up to an acceptable standard. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission concurred, rating the overall road system in Orinda as poor by assigning it a Pavement Condition Index of 49 out of 100. The Orinda City Council, together with its Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission, held an informational meeting June 10 to discuss the city's road repair plan and whether it should be updated, and a potential additional funding option. Harris and Associates, a construction management firm, estimated that \$52 million was needed to improve Orinda public roads to an average PCI of 70 (very good), with no roads below an index of 50. The CIOC estimated \$14 million more was needed to repair the drains. This \$66 million, 10-year Road and Drainage Repair Plan was presented to Orinda residents in 2012.

Orindans passed Measure L that year, which added a half-cent sales tax to pay for road maintenance and repair. Combined with revenue from a gasoline tax and a countywide transportation tax, plus money from the city's general fund, these sources contribute \$2 million a year to the 10-year road funding pool. Measure J authorized Orinda to issue \$20 million in general obligation bonds to fund the repair of storm drains and roads in the city. To reach the \$66 million goal, the road repair plan calls for an additional \$25.5 million to be raised through a parcel tax, a bond measure or another source.

But in December, Capital Asset and Pavement Services, Inc, a roads consultant using updated metrics, recommended that the ideal strategy for repairing the Orinda roads network was to target a PCI rating in the mid-80s, with a five-year cost of \$59.2 million, exceeding the city's planned five-year funding level by approximately \$29.0 million. The company report determined that, if Orinda applied this strategy, the city's entire deferred maintenance backlog would be eliminated in the first year.

Council members agreed that since the public was promised a 10-year plan with an average PCI of 70, Orinda should not follow the CAPS ideal strategy recommendation, which would result in higher costs. "It would break our bond with the community when we asked them to vote for this plan," said Vice Mayor Victoria Smith.

Amy Worth, Orinda councilmember and MTC commissioner, charged the infrastructure commission to come up with a range of options to significantly raise the Orinda PCI yet stay within the framework of the road repair plan. She discussed the potential countywide half-cent sales tax increase as an additional revenue source, and both she and CIOC chair Darlene Gee suggested that Orinda must determine priorities for what it hoped to achieve with the money derived from the passage of that tax measure, expected to be placed on the 2016 ballot. Suggested projects beyond general road repair included a pedestrian and bike plan, improved Highway 24 east access and a BART underground parking garage.

Public comments ranged from a request to repair a culvert in a neighborhood street to a proposal of taxing residents \$100 million to rebuild the entire Orinda road system. A resident later suggested that the 70/50 PCI goals were incompatible.

Not one speaker, however, indicated that money allocated to repairing Orinda roads was money misspent.

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