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City Paves the Way for Revised Roads, Drainage Plan

By Victor Ryerson

Orinda's City Council approved an updated plan for repairing the city roads and associated drainage, an effort that originated in 2012 as the 10-year Plan, but is revisited every two years. The plan was last updated in April 2014.

The plan depends upon approval of future funding of \$47 million by the council and voters, and adds a fifth phase to the previous four to allow for that funding approval to be accomplished in two steps. The council has already acted to put a \$25 million general obligation bond issue on the ballot this June. The remaining \$22 million needed to complete the work will be sought by approval of another bond, parcel tax or other means in 2018.

The fifth and final phase will involve extending the current half-cent sales tax, which expires in 2022, and seeking other revenue sources to maintain the improved condition of the roads.

The overall objective of the repair program is to increase the condition of all of Orinda's 92.5 miles of paved, publicly owned roads to a minimum Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of 50 or greater over the course of the work, and then have sufficient resources to maintain the roads to that standard afterward. Given the history of gradual deterioration since the city's founding because of the shortage of available funding in the city's budget, this is an ambitious goal. The city has elected to do the work in stages, funding each stage as the program progresses and revising the plan as each stage nears completion, to gain voter acceptance.

The ongoing project is one that Council Member Amy Worth likened to building a series of buildings, rather than completing a single project. The city is currently performing repairs with revenues raised under the first two phases of the project, as well as state and federal grants and other unplanned sources.

The updated plan adopted by the council on March 15 reflects changes since the 2014 update, including the passage of Measure L, which approved a one-half cent sales tax increase that provides approximately \$1 million each year, and Measure J, which allows the city to raise \$40 million through a general obligation bond issue for repair of the worst residential roads and associated drainage. Roads are still being repaired under Phases 1 and 2 of the plan.

The city uses a detailed methodology to prioritize the selection of roads to improve to reach the minimum average PCI of 50. The full report and more detailed information are available at the City's website, www.cityoforinda.org.

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[back](#)

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