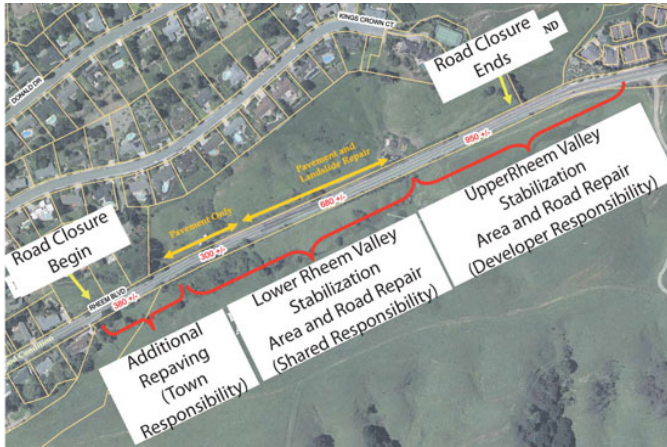


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Rheem Boulevard Shuts Down, Affecting Traffic and Neighbors

By Sophie Braccini



Rheem Boulevard construction Image provided

Residents of Moraga and Lafayette who use the Rheem Boulevard between Saint Mary's Road and Moraga Road will have to find alternate routes until the middle of the fall.

The arterial in serious disrepair will be closed until at least the middle of October to be reconstructed and underlying terrain slides made safe. The drivers most impacted will be Saint Mary's students going to or coming from the Rheem Center, Burton Valley and Bluffs residents driving to school and Rheem Boulevard residents and neighbors.

The much anticipated repairs of Rheem Boulevard by SummerHill Homes - which is developing the adjacent Bellavista site - and the town of Moraga should begin by June 15. The boulevard is to be closed between Fay Hill Road and 591 Rheem Boulevard.

Kevin Ebrahimi, vice president of development at SummerHill, said that the road will be only accessible to residents living on Rheem, and that through traffic will not be permitted for at least four-and-a-half months. In March, when SummerHill presented a new plan to renovate Rheem, the schedule was three months. Now Ebrahimi warned that end of October is the target, as long as new difficulties do not emerge during the excavation and repair of Rheem.

The boulevard is a favorite route to school for Bluffs residents, as well as families living in Burton Valley with children going to Campolindo High School. Ebrahimi confirmed that notices had been sent to the Bluffs residents and additionally to the mandated homes within 300 feet of the site. No notice was sent to Lafayette.

The Sampson family lives along that damaged portion and they know that their life will just be a little more complicated, especially when school starts late August. Kindra Sampson said that her daughter going to Campolindo will have to go around from Rheem to Saint Mary's Road, all the way down to the crossing with Moraga Road, and back to the high school.

"This way is already very impacted in the morning, and it will just get worse as long as Rheem is closed," said Sampson. She said her family has already been impacted by the noise of the Bellavista grading activities, but they expect that the repair of the boulevard will be a very good by-product of the development.

The work is a major undertaking since the road has to be excavated first to stabilize the underlying terrain with piers and tension cables that will be drilled diagonally down into the bedrock beneath the slide. It was a project the town would have had difficulty funding on its own and it is why it was part of the conditions of approval of the Bellavista project (a.k.a. Rancho Laguna II) and that the developer would take charge of a major part of the repairs.

The town's public work department decided to allow construction activities to occur between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturdays to minimize the duration of the road closure.

For questions, contact Paul Medeiros, (408) 529-6020, pmedeiros@shhomes.com, or Moraga Public Works, (92) 888-7026, publicworks@moraga.ca.us.

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[back](#)

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