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A drive to solve Lafayette's traffic problem

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Iswalt reminded the audience of the steps taken to this point since the study's inception in August 2015. Together with a specifically formed steering committee there have been many meetings with both the circulation committee and the city council. What started with over 100 possible strategies was whittled down ultimately to the current shortlist of 15 ideas on which they are inviting public feedback.

Iswalt made it clear that in his opinion there is no silver bullet; that each solution comes at a cost. He presented several projections for growth in the area, which would require implementation of different solutions over time.

Vice Mayor Don Tatzin explained that there would likely be

some combination of strategies. Tatzin pointed out that while some are minimally impacting, others come at a larger cost and might be looked at in the future. He urged residents to make their voices heard, not just with what not to do, but also more constructively.

And residents did have a chance to have their say. During a question and answer session people raised concerns from additional traffic on residential streets to loss of parking spaces with new road configurations.

One resident claimed she did in fact have the "silver bullet" solution and proposed a footbridge over Moraga Road, as she claimed much of the delays during school peak times would be avoided if students were not having to stop

traffic to cross the road continuously. Her suggestion was enthusiastically received by the crowd and Iswalt promised to talk further to her although he pointed out they had already considered pedestrian bridges and said that there are issues such as meeting ADA standards and with the amount of space required.

Large city street maps were laid out on tables at the back of the room and the public was invited to use colorful sticky notes to leave their ideas, suggestions and feedback on the maps.

Once all the public input has been gathered and a final report is made, the city council will hear a final presentation of the downtown congestion reduction plan in July.

PG&E delays tree removal plan

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Mayor Mike Anderson expects the council to receive a comprehensive report from PG&E at a regularly scheduled city council meeting later in the summer and that the report will respond fully to the alternatives and options raised by residents to avoid the removal of the trees.

Anderson says, "I am hopeful that the safety and integrity of the pipeline can be maintained with removal of only the trees proved to be absolutely necessary to achieve this goal, with no other reasonable option available."

However, Lafayette resident and founder of the Save Lafayette Trees organization Michael Dawson does not share that optimism. "We don't have firm confirmation that any trees will be spared, and the letter from Angus Coyle demonstrates they are simply delaying the same unfortunate effects of the same agreement." Dawson

says that it does not change their organization's stance.

During a recent walk along the trail by PG&E representatives and concerned residents, Dawson says they brought up many questions, such as why they would take down trees where the slope is failing? What about the nesting birds?

"Will they pour pesticides on trees so close to Las Trampas Creek? How can PG&E be certain of trees ownership along the trail along property lines? Why is there an exposed section of pipe? Where are their safety valves? How does a pipe travel under the deep creek beds? How do they test and inspect the pipes?" he asks.

Dawson says that they would like PG&E to post notices on the trees slated for removal, conduct the appropriate environmental reviews, and respond back with confirmation that the trees of

community concern are no longer under consideration.

Lafayette resident David Kusters says that he was encouraged by PG&E's decision to delay the start of their planned removal of Lafayette trees, and its intent to prepare a detailed report about the pipeline's history and planned safety improvements in Lafayette.

But Kusters says, "However, many serious technical issues have been raised by members of the community about this project. I continue to believe that the responsible way to reconcile those issues is to commission a small group representing all stakeholders (including Lafayette residents) who would roll up their sleeves, examine the technical issues and patiently reach a consensus recommendation."

But for the summer at least, the chainsaws are quiet while dialog continues.

Diplomas for Saint Mary's College grads



Photos Cathy Dausman

Two batches of Saint Mary's College students, class of 2017, received their diplomas on the Moraga campus during ceremonies held over Memorial Day weekend.

An estimated 680 Saint Mary's College undergrads were awarded diplomas May 27; the following day some 640 graduate students received their diplomas during graduate and professional studies commencement, also held on campus.

John Diaz, a San Francisco Chronicle editor, delivered the undergraduate commencement address. Diaz, in a lighthearted moment referring to last year's commencement speaker Mahershalah Ali, expressed hope that he, too might win an Oscar after speaking before the SMC crowd.

Human rights advocate Deborah Richardson, herself a Saint Mary's College graduate (Richardson earned a master's degree in Leadership in 2013) addressed the graduate studies crowd Sunday. — Cathy Dausman

