

Published May 31st, 2017

Traffic lights hit temporary roadblock

By Pippa Fisher



Photo Pippa Fisher

After a flurry of orange-vest and hard-hat activity along Reliez Station Road in Lafayette in recent months, work on the installation of the two new sets of traffic lights stalled temporarily.

Although residents might see some continued cleanup work and will have noticed the poles and new signage, the project is delayed due to several unanticipated conflicts concerning insufficient clearance from existing high-voltage electrical transmission lines.

Currently all intersection improvement work and all underground electrical infrastructure to support the new signals is complete.

Lafayette city engineering staff is talking with PG&E to solve the new issues and are exploring the possibility of deenergizing the lines temporarily to allow for the installation at the Olympic Boulevard intersection. Lafayette City Engineer Tony Coe says that Lafayette would schedule that work during the time of day that would affect the least number of PG&E customers and that it could mean late night work.

Further up the hill at the Las Trampas Road and Richelle Court intersection, Coe says that the overhead lines that are closer to the ground may have to be physically raised to provide proper clearance, which would require

engineering by PG&E. He says that could take a little more time. "Preliminary estimates given to us range from 10-12 weeks, but we are aggressively pressing for this timeline to be shortened in the interest of expediting a public safety project."

At the same time the city staff is also exploring ways to install the rest of the equipment that has no conflicts and can safely operate the signal in a temporary configuration.

The project had been slated for completion by the end of April 2017. Coe apologized for the delay saying, "A series of separate issues ranging from unmarked underground utilities to equipment shortage has had a cumulative effect on our ability to stay on schedule."

He says that although the current issue with overhead line clearance is "a significant obstacle" city staff is actively pursuing all strategies to speed up completion.

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