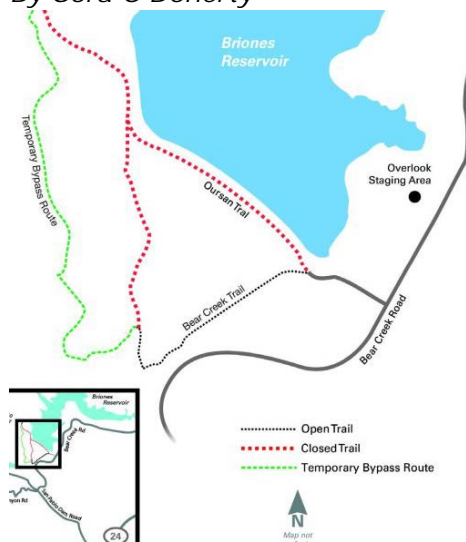




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## Orinda City Council expresses outrage about EBMUD soil removal project

By Sora O'Doherty



Map showing closed section of trails Provided

Orinda City Council members reacted with shock and anger when staff told them that the East Bay Municipal Utility District plans to move some 200,000 cubic yards of accumulated trench soil over Orinda roads and past Wagner Ranch Elementary School at the rate of 17 heavy trucks per hour in each direction from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. for seven months. Director of Public Works Larry Theis told the council that the city had received very little notice of the project, scheduled to begin April 16 and run through October. The route the trucks will take goes from Bear Creek Road, down Camino Pablo to Highway 24, and returning on the same roads. The excess soil will be transported to Oyster Point near the Oakland Airport. The project will also close some trails in Briones Regional Park.

Council Member Darlene Gee said she was frustrated and disheartened that EBMUD doesn't seem to feel the need to be a good community partner. Vice Mayor Inga Miller went further, labeling it "outrageous that barely six months after EBMUD came here to apologize for its poor communication skills in the Glorietta and Orchard Road incident," they are again failing to communicate with

Orinda. She said it has now come to light that at that very time EBMUD had gone ahead and was secretly working on this project. "It's a terrible travesty," Miller said, and not acceptable - 130 of the heavy trucks will be going past an elementary school, past the path where students are walking to school. The trucks will also damage some newly paved parts of Camino Pablo. Theis stated that each single truck trip has the equivalent impact as 8,000 passenger vehicle trips.

Mayor Amy Worth expressed her concern about EBMUD proceeding without sufficient notice, and announced that EBMUD would appear at the city council meeting on April 17, the day after the project is scheduled to begin, to respond to council questions. Perhaps owing to the lack of notice, no members of the public spoke to the plan at the April 10 City Council meeting.

Although the city only recently received notice of the EBMUD project, it has been in the planning stages since August, the same month as EBMUD's public apology to Orinda for the Orchard Road debacle (see the Aug. 23 Lamorinda Weekly article, "Orchard Road Detour Ends"), according to a letter to City Manager Steve Salomon from EBMUD's General Manager Alexander R. Coate. City staff have now filed a Public Records Act request with EBMUD. Theis stated that he thinks EBMUD has behaved "in bad faith."

In the letter, EBMUD claims that a traffic impact study is only required for projects that generate over 50 peak hour vehicle trips and that their project is well below the threshold limit. EBMUD also claims that, based on traffic data from Orinda's 2015-23 Housing Element Update, the additional vehicles generated by its project will temporarily increase morning peak hour traffic on Camino Pablo on average less than 3 percent and will avoid afternoon peak hour traffic. According to EBMUD, the trucks will run from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

On its website, EBMUD says that it is communicating with local cycling groups as well as Wagner Ranch Elementary School regarding the temporary increases in truck traffic. A portion of Oursan Trail within Briones Reservoir will be rerouted during this time. Maps of the truck hauling route and the Briones trail reroute can also be found online at [www.ebmud.com](http://www.ebmud.com).

Reach the reporter at: [sora@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sora@lamorindaweekly.com)

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