

CCTA awarded \$1.490 million grant for Countywide Evac Plan

By Vera Kochan

The Contra Costa County Transportation Authority (CCTA) proposes to develop a new Countywide Emergency Evacuation Plan. A \$1.490 million grant for the Plan was awarded to CCTA by Caltrans and will be shared by all 19 Contra Costa cities and unincorporated county.

This Plan will conduct local-level evacuation compliance assessments, per Senate Bill 99, which requires cities, upon the next revision of the Housing Element on or after Jan. 1, 2020, to review and update the safety element to include information identifying residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes. Also, a high-level evacuation route capacity, safety, and viability analysis for the county is expected per Assembly Bill 747, which requires jurisdictions to, after Jan 1, 2022, review and update the safety element of their general plan.

Additionally, the Plan builds upon the development of the Contra Costa County multi-jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. An outcome of this study, as identified by several agencies throughout the county, is an understanding that typical climate and other hazard risks may result in multi-jurisdictional evacuations using routes that may span several jurisdictions.

CCTA is adding \$212,900 as a local match, which puts the project's cost at \$1,702,900. "There is no breakdown of how much budget will be applied to the Town of Moraga and cities of Orinda

and Lafayette individually," stated CCTA Director of Planning John Hoang. "We are looking at several key areas throughout the county and Lamorinda is identified as one of those key communities we will focus on regarding fire emergencies."

Hoang added, "We will examine the transportation network and evacuation needs and address potential vulnerabilities that could exacerbate emergencies, for instance, by leveraging intelligent transportation system technologies that will be deployed as part of our Countywide Smart Signals project."

"CCTA previously had some experience in funding pilot small Smart Signal projects within a few local county agencies," said Moraga Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp. "Some time ago, Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda began transportation planning efforts and seeking funding to create a Lamorinda regional Smart Signals system. We successfully partnered with CCTA and Congressman Mark DeSaulnier to receive grant funding totaling \$5,913,559 for the design and construction of our regional Smart Signal project."

According to Knapp, Lamorinda has developed evacuation plans; participated in the county's multi-jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan; and has held several coordinated evacuation simulation exercises with police, fire, public works departments, and volunteer groups such as CERT. "The next level improvement for evacuation planning is to identify our inadequate

or bottleneck constraints in our full Lamorinda regional transportation system and work systematically toward addressing them."

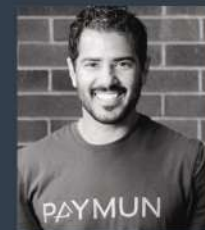
Knapp praised the teamwork of Lamorinda's agencies in their common efforts to resolve transportation issues. By collectively approaching CCTA to become a partner, CCTA was awarded a countywide Sustainable Transportation grant.

"The number one issue raised by residents during the Housing Element process was evacuations during fire," indicated Moraga Planning Director Afshan Hamid. "With the Town being part of a Countywide Emergency Evacuation Plan, this is a huge step forward with the Town listening to resident concerns. The Plan will enable a robust emergency evacuation plan, identify vulnerable communities, assess evacuation timelines, and formulate strategies to optimize egress during emergencies."

Hamid stressed that the Plan will target sustainability and resilience for Moraga's most vulnerable residents and foster proactive cooperation with multi-jurisdictions with regards to climate and hazard risks. "Crafting an Evacuation Plan tailored to the needs of Moraga will empower stakeholders with indispensable tools for adept emergency preparedness and citizen evacuations, especially in scenarios such as wildfires or floods. Lamorinda is taking a leadership role in addressing resident concerns on Evacuation Studies."



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