

Published June 14, 2017

Ill-advised drivers still using Pinehurst Road as an alternate route though Canyon

By Nick Marnell



Not a very good idea. Courtesy Jamie Barret Riley

Ramifications of the Canyon Road bridge outage in Moraga continue to haunt Canyon residents.

On the evening of the Canyon Elementary School Science Fair, a big rig driver lugging an auto carrier detoured onto Redwood Road and Pinehurst Road to avoid congestion on Highway 13 northbound. Predictably, he jackknifed his vehicle on the first major hairpin turn after he passed through Canyon, closing Pinehurst to traffic in both directions. Because the Canyon Road Bridge in Moraga closed in April, the accident shut down one of the only available town access roads for three hours.

According to Gloria Faircloth, Canyon School superintendent, many of the families could not make the May 25 fair, and town residents worried for their safety, fearing that an emergency might occur while the road remained blocked.

The truck driver told Canyon resident Sally Hogarty, who was stuck in the traffic jam, that he used a GPS app that directed him to use Pinehurst to bypass the heavy Highway 13 traffic.

"If you look at a map, it looks like a good way to go," said Moraga Chief of Police Jon King, who mused over the truck driver's action. "But I can't imagine why anyone would do that. And why do these mapping programs think this is a good idea?" Representatives from Waze, Google Maps and Apple Maps did not respond with an answer to that question.

King said he reached out to the routing apps to let them know about the Canyon Road Bridge closure. Julie Bueren, Contra Costa County Public Works Director, said she has successfully reported road closures to Google Maps, although she is still not satisfied. "With this winter's storms and several long term road closures, I realize we need a process to notify mapping companies to ensure the accurate information is out there, and we are looking at how to do that for the County Network," she said.

Signage appears to be the most obvious and immediate solution to deter trucks from using Pinehurst as an alternate route. The town of Moraga posted its informational signage immediately after the bridge closure. According to Fernando Valdez of the Contra Costa Public Works Department, the county posted a No Trucks sign atop Pinehurst near Skyline. And Art Carrea of the Alameda County Public Works Department said that his department will put up a warning sign at the Pinehurst-Redwood Road intersection to discourage truckers from driving on Pinehurst.

But there is a catch to the preventive measures. According to Officer Brandon Correa of the California Highway Patrol, ignoring a warning sign or an informational sign does not provide grounds for a traffic ticket. And despite the ruckus the truck driver caused, "Unless an officer observes a violation, we cannot issue a citation," Correa said.

Sgt. Ray Kelly of the Alameda Sheriff's Office said that it is up to the county supervisors, law enforcement, traffic engineers and community leaders to sit down and talk about the impact and the dangers of a truck going through Canyon. "Our job is to keep the roadways safe for vehicles and pedestrians. If we put up signs here, there will be problems over there; if you do A, then B will happen. What if someone hires a mover? What do they do then?" Kelly said.

Pinehurst Road problems are not caused only by truck drivers; slides and fallen trees have also shut down the road this winter and spring. Citing the longer response times for fire, medical and security emergencies, exacerbated by the road closures since the bridge outage, the Canyon School District board declared a local state of emergency May 25, requesting the state to take action to "restore travel across the Canyon Road bridge quickly."

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA