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No relief on Reliez Valley Road

By John T. Miller



The morning commute on Reliez Valley Road.
Photo Gint Federas

A barrage of speakers from the Reliez Valley Road area addressed the Lafayette City Council at its Oct. 23 meeting, complaining about delays and unsafe driving conditions and pleading for solutions to the problems.

The morning commute has become so bad on the two-lane road that traveling two miles can sometimes take 20 minutes or more. Students trying to get to school at Springhill Elementary, Stanley Middle School, or Acalanes High School have to leave earlier and earlier to avoid tardiness.

Some residents experience 10-minute waits to get out of their driveway, while children trying to cross the street to their school bus stop have to wait equally long before there is a break in the traffic.

The traffic either moves at a crawl, or, when possible, drivers speed recklessly. Residents report drivers passing school buses with their flashing lights on, and others

using the left hand lane - going in the wrong direction - to pass long lines of cars.

One speaker said, "I can't believe the brazenness of some of these drivers. It's only a matter of time before there will be a tragic accident." Others claim to have seen many narrow misses.

One local resident reported that taking Bear Creek Road to Stanley Middle School was two minutes faster than enduring the backups on Reliez Valley, while more than one speaker said that getting downtown has become so difficult that many residents head to other cities to shop.

Transportation Planner James Hinkamp, who delivered the report on conditions, said, "A point of contention has been mobile navigation applications like Google Maps and Waze." Drivers are learning that Alhambra Valley Road to Reliez Valley is the quickest route in the morning to Highway 24 (even with the backups), and more and more commuters are traveling this way.

After listening to nearly two hours of testimony, the council considered some of the solutions, including no right turns allowed at certain spots, speed bumps, and increased police surveillance and ticketing.

Also suggested is to discuss jurisdiction issues with the county and the city of Pleasant Hill, finalize term count movements, take a further look into data and counter measures, and convene a circulation committee meeting to receive further public input and potential remedies. The council authorized staff to proceed with these next steps.

Reach the reporter at: john@lamorindaweekly.com

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