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Public Forum

The Grim Picture

Orinda, known for its beautiful scenic hills, its excellent schools, its small town semi-rural feel, and its great weather is increasingly known for terrible roads. The 2011 Metropolitan Transportation Commission Pothole report listed Orinda's roads among the worst in the entire Bay Area. The estimated total cost to bring the roads up to an optimal paving condition index is over \$50 Million! Unfortunately, just maintaining the current dilapidated state and preventing further deterioration of the roads will still cost at least \$2.1 Million per year. For a city with a total budget of about \$10 million per year and almost completely dependent on property tax dollars, how does the City tackle the cost of fixing the roads?

The roads issue in Orinda has been an ongoing battle since the City incorporated in 1985. At that time the 92 miles of roads the City inherited were already deteriorating in part due to our hilly terrain and claylike soil. Under the rating system (Pavement Condition Index, PCI) used in the Bay Area our systemwide PCI is 49 (100 max) which puts the overall system in the poor category.

Each year the City sets aside all its gas tax, county transportation return to source funds and garbage franchise fees, about 25% of its discretionary budget, to roads and seeks thousands in grant funding; unfortunately this is never enough and each year the City falls short of finding the money to address this problem.

In light of its ongoing budget constraints the City adopted the Pavement Management Plan Program that includes established criteria for selecting streets for repairs that is open and transparent and includes review and recommendations by the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission. In 2011 this program spent \$1.1 Million on various roads throughout the City. The 2011 list included portions of Lombardy Lane, E. Altarinda Drive at St. Stephens road to Orindawoods Dive, a small segment of Camino Sobrante, Tara Road at Southwood Drive to Nonie Road, Valley View Drive at Moraga Way to Crestview Drive and Coral Drive at Ivy Drive to Eastwood.

Chairing the Commission that oversees road repair funding decisions for Orinda is one of the worst volunteer jobs you could ever imagine as I regularly get to tell my fellow Orinda citizens that as bad as their road is there's probably one worse and that under our current funding we will most likely never fix their residential roads. It's not what I want to be known for and it's not what a city like ours should accept, but it's the reality under current funding. In the meantime, I'm looking for a four wheel drive convertible so that I can enjoy our great weather but still get home!

Alex Evans

Orinda

(Alex Evans is a member of the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission)

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