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Planning for Moraga's Roads

By Sophie Braccini

Edric Kwan was hired to replace Jill Mercurio as Town Engineer and Public Works Director in July. His experience in road maintenance, garnered in several Bay Area cities, includes the use of the popular software called Street Saver. He has studied the work done by his predecessor to assess the state of each of the town's roads and project the most efficient actions to take, depending on the available budget, and design a plan to save Moraga's roads, whether or not Measure K passes.

"We will take an approach similar to El Cerrito that has been very successful in improving the state of its roads," said Kwan. "Using Street Saver we will find the most bang for our buck, to increase the PCI (Pavement Condition Index) for the entire network of roads."

Street Saver was used to arrive at the \$24 million estimate to raise Moraga's roads from poor to good. If Measure K passes, with less money than this needed amount, Kwan is confident that he will be able to provide residents with significant improvement. "If it passes it will really help us with the backlog and that's really significant because if we do not do it now the streets will continue to deteriorate and the cost will triple within 10 years."

He detailed what he would do if the measure passes: "The first year will be focused on immediately taking on the repairs of the streets that need it the most to stop the decay," he said. "In parallel, we will do the fieldwork that will determine which complete remediation we can apply, depending on the specific condition of each section of road."

Kwan said he wants to make sure that the streets are done as fast as possible, and correctly the first time. He plans to spend the bond money within three or four years. "Bonding part of the money would give us a large sum up front that would maximize our impact," he said. He believes that this large influx could reduce the total envelop to fix the roads and reduce the amount needed annually.

Street Saver's calculations indicated that to maintain the roads at their current level, the cost will be \$1.55 million per year; raising the level from at risk to good would cost \$2.55 million per year. Even with the large benefit of the sales tax, Moraga will need more money. "We need to build trust with the public, for them to see that the money is put right into the streets," said Kwan, "then they may be willing to do more in the future; the voters will decide."

If the tax does not pass, "that would be a very sad story," said Kwan. "The costs will increase exponentially. It costs \$5 per square yard to add a slurry seal every 3 or 4 years on a road in good shape, while it costs more than \$100 per square yard to repair it when it is failed. Without Measure K, 70 percent of our roads will be failed in 10 years." Currently six percent of Moraga's roads have failed.

Kwan acknowledges that deferred maintenance is a common problem. "If the measure does not pass I will still do my best, focusing on putting band-aids all over the place, but the reality is that (the roads) will continue to deteriorate," he concluded.

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