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## The Bridge to Canyon

By Sophie Braccini



Canyon Road bridge Photo Andy Scheck

It's a bucolic little bridge over a nice creek. The dilapidated, 24-foot wide structure provides emergency services access to the unincorporated community of Canyon. It serves as one of only three exit routes out of Moraga and is shared 6,000 times a day by cars, bicycles and pedestrians. The Canyon Road bridge, located where the road narrows at the edge of town, is modest in appearance but serves a vital function. After a Caltrans inspection revealed the bridge to be structurally deficient, Moraga's public works director, Edric Kwan, started researching engineering solutions.

The Canyon Road bridge, called the "white bridge" by Canyon residents, was built in 1936 and passes over the west branch of the San Leandro Creek. The bridge is eligible for replacement, Kwan told the Moraga Town Council Oct. 23 as he presented his plan. The proposed new bridge will be 40 feet wide, accommodate future bike lanes, and have a sidewalk on one side. The new construction will be able to weather an earthquake, which is not at all a given for the current bridge.

Kwan explained that his preliminary study suggests two possibilities as far as the timing of the construction of a

replacement bridge: all construction work could take place in a single season - April to October - and would cut off access to the bridge; or the work could be completed over two years, addressing one side of the bridge at a time.

"I agree that the project is a good idea; it's the implementation that concerns me," said Canyon resident and emergency preparedness expert Jonathan Goodwin. "Surely the first option would be cheaper, but it would increase Code 3 medical, fire and police response to Canyon from about 12 minutes to around 30 minutes. The potential for loss of life or catastrophic fire would be greatly increased," Goodwin stated, adding that it seemed to him that emergency response from Oakland would be infeasible.

Kwan said after the meeting that he is aware this is a major issue for Canyon residents and his plan includes a large community outreach and input campaign to take into account the needs of all constituencies.

Canyon resident and former Caltrans employee S. Eric Olafsson also commented after the meeting and proposed a different alternative: build a better new bridge. "The present bridge is on a horrible alignment, where you need to turn sharply to get on," he said. "I would think they could take a small portion of the pear orchard and build a new bridge on an improved alignment, without demolishing the old bridge until the opening of the new one."

The pear orchard property belongs to the Moraga School District.

The Town Council authorized Kwan to contract with Nolte Vertical 5 of Walnut Creek for an amount not to exceed \$567,016 for civil engineering and bridge design services. Kwan secured funding for the study through Caltrans and the Measure J Transportation Sales Tax. Construction of the bridge will not start until 2015.

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