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## Mapping Orinda's Road to Improvement

*By Laurie Snyder*

Dennis Fay is a roads scholar - literally. With a master's degree in transportation engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and over four decades in that field - including as executive director of the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (now the Alameda County Transportation Commission), the 20-year Orinda resident understands firsthand the challenges of maintaining roads in California's shifting geological and budgetary landscapes. Currently chair of the Orinda Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission, he has been a member since CIOC's inception, and enjoys volunteering with his fellow Orindans. "They're a very dedicated group of people willing to put in the time to try to understand transportation issues. They bring thoughtfulness to the deliberation, asking questions about why we do things the way we do and whether or not we need to look at issues differently."

Fay is also a fan of residents for passing back-to-back infrastructure initiatives. Measure L, a half cent sales tax given a thumbs-up in 2012, "showed the willingness of the voters to put money behind their demands for improved roads. As we began to use the money, it showed residents they could trust the city to spend these types of funds wisely."

In June, Orindans supported Measure J with 75 percent of the vote - well above the 66 percent needed for the measure's passage. "That's pretty remarkable," he said. Seasoned pollsters told Fay that most initiatives face defeat right from the start. On average, 20 percent automatically vote against any ballot measure - regardless of the issue. So, when Measure J garnered 75 of the 80 percent available, Orindans were clearly declaring in Henry Youngman-like fashion, "Take my pothole. Please!"

To that end, on Sept. 2, the Orinda City Council approved criteria for selecting roads to be repaired via Measures L and J.

One yardstick to be used is Pavement Condition Index. Orinda's worst roads currently have PCIs of 1 to 25, including parts of Lost Valley Road labeled 5, 6 or 7. Once repaved, segments will receive scores of 100. There is a margin of error of plus or minus five, however, because up to four specially trained people will assess PCI - each a human being with a slightly different eye.

In addition, storm drainage could also alter priorities. A study underway should make it easier for engineers to predict which drains and roads might be at risk and prioritize accordingly, but if Mother Nature decides to send another Tarabrookian deluge, certain streets could be pushed off the to-do list to facilitate emergency repairs.

However, with California's current drought, that doesn't appear likely. So, a long list of work is projected through October. Segments of Lost Valley and Charles Hill roads will receive attention under Measure L, and several arterials and collectors will be repaved separately from Measure L. By the time the terms of both measures expire, said Fay, "We're going to get at all of the roads in Orinda that are in really terrible shape."

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