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## Originally Denied, Moraga Secures Federal Funding for Sinkhole

*By Sophie Braccini*

Moraga is eligible to receive federal funding for sinkhole repair after all, thanks to a successful appeal of the original decision to deny support.

Moraga Town Engineer and Public Works Director Edric Kwan was successful in appealing the original decision, announced last month, that denied funding for the sinkhole that formed on Rheem Boulevard near Center Street last March.

It is good news for the town's finance since the cost of still-needed repairs is estimated at \$3 million. However, federal funding means federal processes and guidelines, and town staff warns residents that the initial plan to repair the culvert and the street might be thrown off, and that the deadline of Oct. 15 - the beginning of the rainy season - might not be met.

The Federal Highway Administration has agreed to reimburse the town more than \$500,000 for the work it has done, including the emergency response, road closure, erosion protection, fencing, traffic signal repair and other work associated with the sinkhole that formed when the Rancho Laguna Creek culvert failed under the intersection, causing a gas line rupture and collapse of the driveway. The town is also eligible to receive 88.5 percent of the estimated \$2.9 million for future repair costs, leaving the town with a \$338,150 bill.

Kwan had initially targeted the date of Oct. 15 to complete the culvert repairs with a new concrete structure replacing the corrupted metal section, as well as the road reconstruction. As the town's first appeal to federal funding was denied, he planned to at least repair the culvert before the rainy season, leaving the road for the next construction cycle. Now that federal funding is granted, delays might increase further.

In a press release, staff warned that, "The Town's original plan to award a contract for construction will now be delayed to meet the FHWA guidelines." To deal with the eventuality of being unable to repair the culvert before the rainy season, staff will be ready to divert the stormwater until the construction can resume. It is likely that driving at the crossing will continue to be disrupted into 2017.

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