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Lafayette council streamlines transportation projects for future funding

By Lou Fancher

Raising public awareness of and to have a conversation about potential transportation projects so appropriate and timely funding can be sought was the purpose of a presentation at the Jan. 22 council meeting by Transportation Program Manager Patrick Golier.

City staff sought council input because citywide projects needed to be efficiently communicated so that staff is able to anticipate grant opportunities far enough in advance of funding deadlines. Relatively short timelines between a grant program's call-for-projects and the application due date limit the ability of the staff to vet potential projects through public processes on a case-by-case basis. In the report, they suggested that having a number and variety of identified future projects that may be candidates for when grant programs are announced would be helpful, if not essential to obtaining transportation funding for unfunded projects identified in 2024's Transportation Work Plan. He emphasized that none of the discussion of the six projects he planned to introduce in the meeting precluded the usual public engagement process that must follow, should any of the projects receive future funding.

The six projects include the EBMUD Aqueduct Pathway Project; updates to Lafayette's Walkways and Bicycle Master Plans; Traffic Signal Design and Construction at Deer Hill Road/Oak Hill Road; a traffic study involving right-turn on red restrictions along Mt. Diablo Boulevard.; construction of St. Mary's Drop-Off and Sidewalk Gap Closure Project; and the Pleasant Hill Road Center-Median Multi-Use Pathway Project. Each project involves funding for different phases, such as to initiate studies, or move into design stages, or to complete construction of approved designs, among others.

Council Member Carl Anduri voiced concern about downtown corridor mobility and safety planning that he believes should be more complete before investing council discussion and staff time into the unfunded projects. Public comments primarily addressed the center-median pathway project, with people suggesting the project needed more clarification as to location, design, and other details before being included on the project list. Prioritizing and eliminating some of the projects to better focus on fewer projects most important to the city and its residents received support from a person participating virtually.

Mayor Gina Dawson said prioritizing the list in consideration of staff's limited time as was suggested by the public speaker was advisable. Council Member Teresa Gerringer and Anduri said it would be premature to approve the entire list without more time for the council to study and hold conversations about the Pleasant Hill pathway project. That project was removed from the list. The EBMUD Aqueduct Pathway Project was determined by the council to be a priority, and council invited the engineering department to determine the prioritization of the remaining four projects based on which are best positioned for grant opportunities as they arise. The council unanimously approved a motion to support the staff's request to move forward with funding requests when they become available.

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