

El Dorado Hills Telegraph - Town Meeting draws a crowd

By Jim Ratajczak

Concerned residents of El Dorado Hills flocked to the El Dorado County Senior Center March 19 to attend a "Town Hall Meeting," at which traffic and road issues were discussed.

More than 70 people packed the main room of the senior center to ask questions and listen to updates about area road issues from a guest panel consisting of Richard Shepard, Department of Transportation director, Russ Nygaard, DOT deputy director, supervisors Rusty Dupray and Helen Baumann, and Captain Bill Donovan, of the California Highway Patrol.

Billy Vandegrift, EDHCSD president, was the meeting's moderator.

While the official agenda called for updates of planned road improvements, discussion of possible impacts of recent declines in funding on future road improvement projects and current traffic trends, the meeting was actually a 90-minute question-and-answer session.

Many of residents in attendance shared the views of Dupray and Baumann - that El Dorado Hills has paid the money, but isn't seeing any improvements.

"We are disappointed most of the money comes from down here and most of the problems are down here," Dupray said. "The previous board approved all of this development and it's insufficient. We need to do a better job of planning for the future."

Topics raised by attendees included traffic light timing on cross-town arteries connecting to Highway 50, the creation of more nature trails in El Dorado Hills, allocation of funds from Measure H, the perceived increase of CHP patrols in the area, and of course, when major road construction will be completed.

Shepard and Nygaard were unable to give specific timetables for the completion of many DOT projects because of lack of funding, which Shepard said is directly tied to the housing market.

"We're facing a housing slowdown at the moment," Shepard said. "And 50 percent of our Capital Improvement Program revenue comes from housing development fees."

Shepard also added that the CIP is facing a \$20 million reduction from 2007-08.

Vandegrift expressed his concern over the completion of the Saratoga Road project, which would provide another way for drivers to commute to and from El Dorado County and Folsom.

"Our design is more than preliminary," Nygaard said. "It's to a point where we could go into final development if we had to."

Shepard added that progress on the Saratoga Road project depends on the progression of surrounding housing developments.



El Dorado Hills Telegraph - Town Meeting draws a crowd

According to Shepard, two major area projects will be under way by the end of summer - the widening and alignment of Latrobe Road and the widening and alignment of White Rock Road, expected to cost approximately \$60 million.

Nygaard did estimate that the White Rock Road project would be finished “very fast” because the rain season has ended.

Ultimately, the DOT officials made it clear that progression of road and traffic projects is tied to funding. And currently, neither is sure when those funds will increase or where they will come from.

So for the time being, it’s a matter of prioritizing.

“We have to ask, ‘What are our priorities?’” said Nygaard. “‘What will give us the most bang for our buck?’ so to say.”

3/25/08

<http://www.edhtelegraph.com/detail/80215.html>