

Traffic threatens EDH economic vitality

County struggles to keep up with EDH road projects

By **MIKE ROBERTS**
Village Life staff writer

Traffic congestion threatens an El Dorado Hills economic engine that continues to pump tax revenues into county coffers and provide a growing number of the County's precious white collar jobs. At the March 19 EDH Town Hall meeting Supervisor Rusty Dupray put it this way: "Most of the money is generated down here and most of the traffic problems are also down here."

Organizers of the March 19 town hall meeting decided "transportation" would be a timely topic, given the County supervisors' recent vote to push major El Dorado Hills freeway access projects off the Capital Improvement Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan is a list of the new road construction projects that have been approved and funded for the next five years.

"We also looked at the comments from the prior town hall meetings, and decided it would be a good time to let residents send their message directly to those in charge," said EDH Community Service District General Manager Wayne Lowery.

Genial CSD board president Billy Vandegrift moderated the roughly two-hour community meeting, and brought a convivial tone to the otherwise serious topic.

A standing-room-only crowd of community-minded residents, supervisorial candidates, and EDH activists filled the Senior Center. Many asked polite questions of El Dorado County Department of Transportation Director Richard Shepard and Deputy Director Russ Nygaard, backed up by Dupray and District 2 Supervisor Helen Baumann. CHP Commander Bill Donovan rounded out the panel.

"We have the economic development here," said Baumann, "and we need to provide the infrastructure to support it."

Dupray and Baumann say they are concerned about sales tax

leakage into nearby Folsom, and worry that EDH Boulevard congestion discourages drivers from getting off the freeway, or even crossing under it to shop in El Dorado Hills.

Potential EDH Business Park tenants looking to escape the urban areas also want to know that their employees will be able to get to the freeway without crawling through a daily traffic morass in front of Town Center.

With the County's current five-year capital improvement plan \$14 million over-budget, road projects throughout the county were drastically cut back last month. Supervisors Dupray and Baumann opposed the distribution of road project cuts. Both went public with their disap-

pointment after being on the losing end of the 3-2 vote which postponed major EDH and Cameron Park road projects, but retained a couple large Missouri Flat Road projects in Placerville.

- Latrobe Road realignment and widening, from White Rock Road to Business Park entrance three.
- White Rock Road realignment, from Latrobe Road west .75 miles to Manchester Drive.
- Highway 50 overpass replacement at EDH Boulevard.
- HOV lanes from the county line to Bass Lake Road.
- Saratoga Way extension to Iron Point Road delayed

The first, and to many in EDH,

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The five-year CIP for road projects dropped from \$550 to \$536 million from 2007 to 2008. "[The decrease] doesn't sound like a lot," said Shepard. "But when you look at the 14 percent increase in the cost of construction, we actually lost about \$100 million in actual programming capacity."

Current projects

Despite the budget shortfall, the El Dorado Hills area will see about \$60 million in road projects underway by the end of summer. "If you don't like driving

through construction zones, I suggest that you consider taking long vacations this and next summer," quipped Shepard, who called the effort "one of the largest construction programs ever undertaken in this county."

Most of the roadway's preliminary environmental and design work is complete, with the EIR on schedule to go to the board this fall. "After that, it's just a matter of finding the money to build it," said Shepard.

Silva Valley Parkway interchange pushed back

The Silva Valley Parkway freeway interchange is the eastern component of EDH Boulevard congestion relief. It will stand about a quarter mile east of the current Silva Valley roadway, and provide much needed alternate access to Town Center and Serrano. The interchange will also become a critical alternative access for business park workers and future residents of the planned Blackstone residential project on Latrobe Road.

The proposed interchange will be funded by a "Silva Valley set aside" account, which is in turn funded by one-third of the road fees collected from building permits in both the Serrano and Blackstone developments in El Dorado Hills.

Meanwhile, Shepard said that good progress has been made on the environmental work and design of the interchange and corresponding pedestrian underpass, so that when funding becomes available, DOT can begin construction quickly.

EDH Blvd realignment

The northern EDH Boulevard realignment along Francisco Drive has also been pushed off the five-year horizon. Like the other delayed projects, preliminary design is complete, pending developer fees to begin work.

Other pending projects

Four Seasons resident Bill Knox called the intersection at White Rock and Winfield roads "an accident waiting to happen," and wondered if it could be signalized. The intersection is a heavily used entrance to the EDH Business Park located a quarter mile west of Latrobe Road.

Nygaard explained that the

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