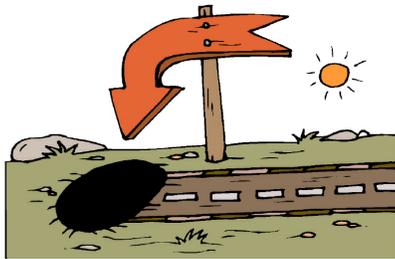


## NYGAARD GIVES BASS LAKE ROADS UPDATE



### ROAD DEVELOPMENT STALLED BY HOUSING SLOWDOWN

Russ Nygaard told a recent meeting of the Bass Lake Action Committee that the postponement of various housing developments will affect the rate at which Bass Lake Road will be improved, and other road projects will proceed as planned. Russ is the Deputy Director, El Dorado County Department of Transportation, Foothills Division.

Responding to a question as to how the State and County budget crises are affecting the Department of Transportation (DOT), Russ said that the DOT, as a county department, is not facing a budget problem. That is because substantially all of the funding for DOT comes from dedicated funds that the County can't allocate to other county departments.

DOT's work is not even slowing down, and the department is still proceeding on projects. However, the housing downturn has resulted in the projection of nine hundred to twelve hundred new home starts in El Dorado County being reduced to only 600 new homes, 300 of which are in El Dorado Hills. This impacts revenues that DOT gets from Traffic Impact Mitigation (TIM) fees from developers and affects DOT's Capital Improvement Program. The El Dorado County Board Supervisors has asked DOT to redo its budget, reducing their income from projected TIM fees by half, to reflect the downturn in the housing market.

DOT is working on a new Capital Improvement Plan that will allocate how the

remaining dollars will be allocated among the remaining projects. The new budget and the project priority list will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at a public workshop that will be held on Monday, February 11, starting at 1 PM. At that time the supervisors will work with the DOT to decide which road projects will go forward and which will be shelved for now.

In the Bass Lake area, the postponement of Bell Woods, Bell Ranch, and Hawk View developments mean that south Bass Lake Road improvements will not occur this year, and it may be five years before it is fixed. DOT is trying to find creative ways to get that part of Bass Lake Road done but has not been very successful. When a development map is approved by the county, it contains all of the conditions that the developer must do to mitigate the presence of the new homes, such as roads, sewers, parks, and utilities.

The developer responsible for improving the southern end of Bass Lake Road is DR Horton. If DR Horton begins developing any one of the three projects, each one of them with a development map, the conditions provide that all of the road development requirements for all three maps is triggered, which would be very expensive. DR Horton has been trying to amend the conditions on its development maps in the Bass Lake Hills Specific Plan to break those maps into three separately conditioned projects, but the process is not going well. Getting a new development map can reopen the scope of the mitigation conditions imposed on the developer, and trigger a discretionary review by the county. DR Horton will probably be bringing their requests back to the County Supervisors, since they have arrived at an impasse with DOT over the maps.

On the other hand, Parker Development is moving forward with the new shopping center that will be located at Serrano Parkway and Bass Lake Road. Parker hopes to have approval of the center from the county

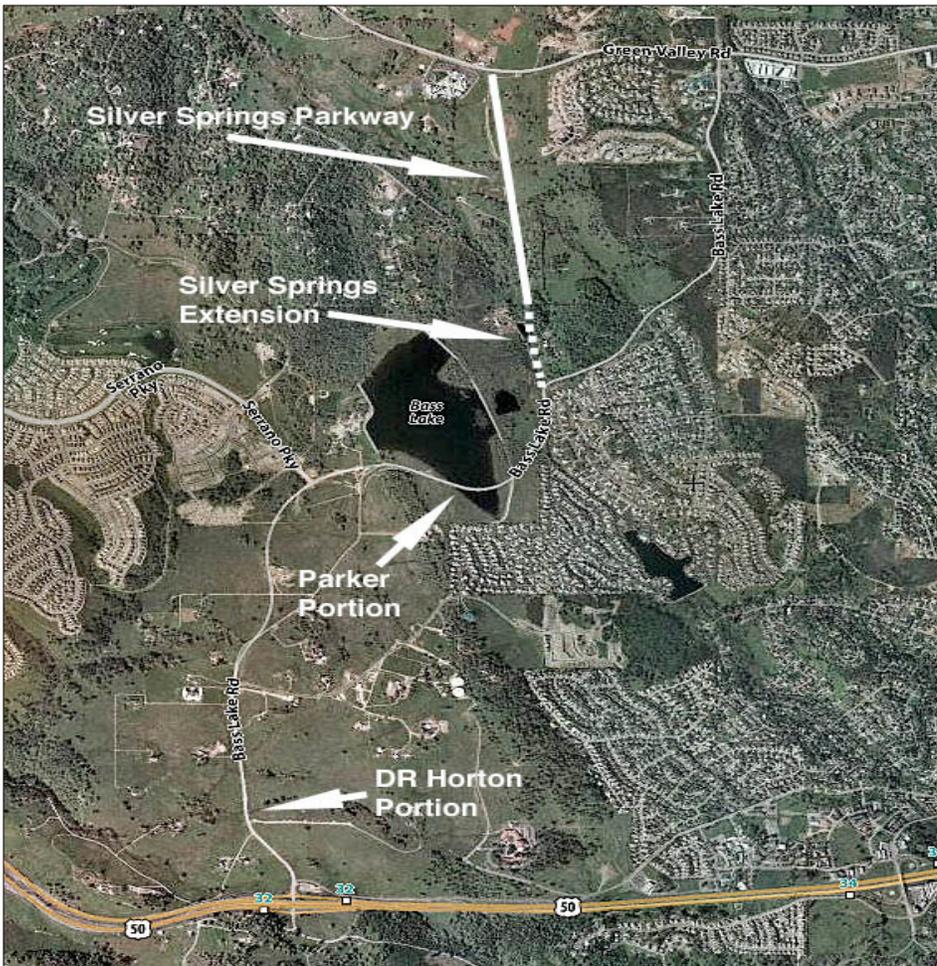
this year. Parker also has plans to develop Villages J-6 and J-7 along the east side of Bass Lake Road between Serrano Parkway and Bridlewood Canyon. As the developer, Parker will be responsible for improving Bass Lake Road where the developments front onto Bass Lake Road. The extent of the improvements northward along Bass Lake Road will depend on the conditions finally agreed to by Parker and DOT, but the configuration of the road will reflect the manner in which the road was improved along its realigned portion.

Farther north along Bass Lake Road, funding for that portion of Silver Springs Parkway that will come south from Green Valley Road to connect with Bass Lake Road north of Madera, the entrance to Woodridge, has been obtained. The developers have sold bonds to build the road, and they now have the money in the bank. DOT has worked out a deal whereby if DOT does the work on the road, DOT can use money from the bonds.

It appears that construction of Silver Springs Parkway will be started this summer. Four related projects will move forward through this bond program: the portion on the development site, the southern connector to Bass Lake Road, and the signalization of Green Valley Road at the Silver Springs and Deer Valley Road intersections. The only things that might hold up construction are some right-of-way issues along the southern end of the road.

As part of the overall improvements to the road, DOT is trying to get Parker to improve Bass Lake Road in front of Bridlewood Canyon and Woodridge. Russ said that Woodridge would have a deceleration lane to turn right onto Madera.

In other road news, the budget for the Saratoga Way extension project was cut from \$10 million to \$714,000 for the next five years due to the postponement of the Rancho Dorado development along the proposed extension. Also, the budget for



Map showing developers' responsibilities for improving Bass Lake Road

## ROADS REPORT *(continued)*

the interchange work at Bass Lake Road and US 50 was cut from \$3.6 million to \$1 million. In addition, the building slowdown has resulted in the delay of the El Dorado Hills Boulevard interchange project, the widening of White Rock Road, the realignment of Country Club Road to Bass Lake Road, and the Cambridge and Cameron Park Drive Interchange projects.

Russ said that the White Rock Road and Latrobe Road intersection project is still on track and will be completed in 2008, including the realignment of White Rock Road south of Latrobe Road.

Regarding Marble Valley, Parker Development is trying to get old maps reissued or revived, but if the development exceeds 398 dwelling units it will trigger a discretionary review that could result in Parker having to do more interchange and road improvements. DOT has told Parker that if they exceed their 398 units, they will have to put in an east-west connector through Marble Valley.

DOT is investigating creative ways to locate the on and off ramps for the interchange slated at Silva Valley and Highway

50 to make maximum use of the space. One option is that all the on and off ramps will be on the east side of the interchange. As part of the Silva Valley Interchange project, Silver Valley Parkway will be improved with turn and merge lanes at Oak Meadow Elementary School.

DOT is working on a grant application to obtain funds to put sidewalks and bicycle lanes in on Green Valley Road from Pleasant Grove Middle School to Bass Lake Road. BLAC residents said that they would also like to see sidewalks and bicycle lanes from Madera to the new intersection of Silver Springs Parkway and Bass Lake Road and from that junction up Bass Lake Road to meet the sidewalk in front of the Hills of El Dorado.

BLAC members expressed concerns about how close the entrances for Bridlewood Canyon and Villages J6 and J7 will be along Bass Lake Road. A member said that he thought they would only be about 300 feet apart, which was a concern to Russ.

After a lengthy question and answer period, Russ was thanked by BLAC President John Thomson and given a hearty round of applause for his presentation. ~



## HIGHWAY 50 HOV PLAN OPPONENTS HOLD LEGAL FUND DRIVE

Neighbors Advocating Sustainable Transportation (NAST) is organizing a fundraiser to raise cash to fund their litigation against Caltrans over the Highway 50 Project that will add High Occupancy Vehicle lanes to Highway 50 from Sunrise Boulevard to downtown Sacramento. The fundraising event will be held on February 22 at Revolution Winery in midtown Sacramento for what the group calls "an evening of wine tasting, a silent auction, and other surprises."

NAST and a local environmental organization jointly filed a lawsuit last July against the state Department of Transportation challenging the adequacy of Caltrans' environmental study of its plan to add carpool lanes on Highway 50. The organizations contend that adding the lanes would encourage sprawl and exacerbate the region's traffic and air quality woes.

Caltrans has proposed adding eastbound and westbound HOV lanes in the median of a heavily congested 13-mile stretch of Highway 50 between Sunrise Boulevard and downtown Sacramento. Caltrans says carpool lanes encourage people to ride together and take mass transit, which removes vehicles from the road. When it is completed, Caltrans says that the project will cut appreciable time off the commutes from western El Dorado County to employment centers along Highway 50.

But NAST and neighborhood associations have argued that it would generate more traffic on the freeway and in downtown neighborhoods.

The complaint cites deficiencies in Caltrans' environmental impact analysis for the proposed highway expansion, including "the failure of Caltrans to estimate the impacts of increased traffic volumes and total vehicle miles traveled that would result from adding a lane to Highway 50," a press release issued by the organizations states. The organizations also want an in-depth comparison of the benefits of adding the lanes to Highway 50 versus light-rail and other transportation alternatives. ~

## THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello Everyone,

As the sun rises over the wreckage left by the housing bubble, it appears likely that speculators were driving the soaring house prices more than anyone knew. The number of people who bought homes as speculative investments is much greater than previously believed.

In many cases, those speculators lied on loan applications, saying they intended to live in the homes in order to obtain more favorable loan terms, or failed to provide the requested information.

One analysis of subprime loans that defaulted within the first 12 months, even though the borrowers had good credit scores, shows that in two-thirds of the cases, borrowers who said they intended to live in the property never moved in.

Some home builders now believe that as many as one in four home buyers in some markets were speculative investors during the boom, up from their earlier estimates of one in ten buyers.

This high number of hidden speculators helps explain some of the problems that are currently affecting the housing and mortgage markets. Speculators are more likely to walk away from their purchases when home prices fall than borrowers who live in the homes.

In the early years of the housing boom, strong economic fundamentals and low interest rates made it more affordable for many Americans to buy homes. But as home prices began to soar, hordes of investors jumped in.

Once there was a whiff that prices could no longer rise, this speculative demand evaporated, sending prices falling.

Our only solace is that booms and busts like this have happened before, and given time they blow over, like a storm that eventually gives over to sunshine after all. Those of us who have been around a while know that this, too, shall pass.

*John E. Thomson*

President



## INCANDESCENT LIGHT BULB BAN FIZZLES

Last year California lawmakers shelved proposed legislation to phase out the common incandescent light bulb, instead adopting a measure that will set an energy-efficiency standard for light bulbs that the bulbs cannot currently meet, but must in the future.

Thomas Edison's 19th century invention, the low-cost but wasteful incandescent bulb, converts only 5 percent of the electricity it uses into light, and the remaining 95 percent is emitted as heat.

Supporters say that the legislation is environmentally friendly, but opponents say the bill is a back-door ban on incandescents and the latest link in a chain of bills that intrude upon consumer choice.

Under the new law, the California Energy Commission is to create standards that by 2018 would reduce electricity consumption by 50 percent for indoor lighting and 25 percent for commercial and outdoor lighting. The bill would also expand existing incentives for energy-efficient lighting.

As part of its hazardous waste component, the bill requires manufacturers to reduce the levels of toxins in lighting products, such as mercury in fluorescent and lead in incandescents, consistent with requirements already in place in the European Union. Also part of the legislation is a provision aimed at collecting and recycling burned-out light bulbs.

Energy experts said that creating an energy standard is more practical than banning incandescents, noting that you can't just eliminate a class of technology if there's not something ready and able to replace it that will give the kinds of benefits that people expect.

The leading candidate to replace the common light bulb is the compact fluorescent lamp, or CFL. Fifty-six percent of homes already use at least one CFL, records show.

The California Energy Commission says CFLs can cost 10 times more than incan-

descents, but that they burn so much longer and use so much less electricity that they save about \$20 per bulb over a three-year period.

Driving the market toward compact fluorescents potentially could create disposal problems for millions of discarded bulbs, since CFLs contain trace amounts of mercury, which can cause respiratory, kidney or other health problems. ~



## DIGITAL TV TRANSITION

The switch from analog to digital broadcast television is referred to as the digital TV (DTV) transition. In 1996, the U.S. Congress authorized the distribution of an additional broadcast channel to each broadcast TV station so that they could start a digital broadcast channel while simultaneously continuing their analog broadcast channel. Later, Congress mandated that February 17, 2009, would be the last day for full-power television stations to broadcast in analog. Broadcast stations in all U.S. markets are currently broadcasting in both analog and digital. After February 17, 2009, full-power television stations will broadcast in digital only.

A lot of media attention has been given to the impending change. Unfortunately, the coverage has tended to give people the impression that they will either need to buy new television sets or a converter box. This is definitely not the case for the majority of households.

More than fifty percent of American homes now have digital TV sets, therefore they won't be affected by the change.

More than 85% of American homes subscribe to a video provider, such as cable or satellite. None of those 85% will be affected by the digital transition, because they don't receive their television signals over the air.

The only households that will be affected are those who don't have a digital TV, and who also receive their television signals over the air. That's about 11% of American households today.

*(continued on page 4)*

## DIGITAL TV *(continued)*

If you do have one or more televisions that receive free over-the-air television programming using a roof-top antenna or “rabbit ears” on the TV, the type of TV you own is very important. A digital television (a TV with an internal digital tuner) will allow you to continue to watch free over-the-air programming after February 17, 2009. However, if you have an analog television, you will need a digital-to-analog converter box to continue to watch over-the-air broadcast television on that set.

It is important to know that the 2009 deadline for the digital television transition only applies to full-power broadcast stations. Cable companies are not required to change their systems to digital, and can continue to deliver channels to their customers in analog. This means that customers who receive analog cable service without a cable set-top box will be able to continue to do so.

However, for business reasons, cable companies may be interested in transitioning their systems from analog delivery to digital delivery. If a cable company decides to stop offering some or all channels to its customers in analog it may require customers with analog televisions to get a set-top box in order to view the digital channels. ~

## INTERNET ACTIVITY UP ON BLAC WEB SITE

As most Internet users now understand, a hit is generated for every file a web server sends out to a user when a web page is accessed, and a typical web page includes anywhere from a handful to dozens of separate files. This past January the Bass Lake Action Committee web site experienced 9,131 hits, a substantial increase over January 2007, which recorded only 6,211 hits. But hit counts, though valuable in setting technical benchmarks, are not a very useful measure of web traffic.

Far more useful are page views, a count that tracks the number of web pages read by visitors to the web site. Total page view counts for a day, a week or a month tell you something about how much traffic your site has. This past January the BLAC website experienced 5,595 page views, an increase over January 2007, which recorded 3,410 page views. Still, the number of page views still don't tell you much about how many unique visitors you had.

So the BLAC web site also tracks the number of unique visitors, and by tallying these numbers you can get a pretty decent

sense of how many individuals visited the BLAC web site during a given time period. For the month of January the BLAC web-site welcomed 1,006 unique visitors, more visitors than January 2007, which recorded 622 visitors.

Page views and unique visitors are valuable statistics, and by that measure the BLAC website has seen a 64% increase in page views and a 62% increase in unique visitors to the site. ~



*Victorian Valentine Card*

## ORIGINS OF THE VALENTINE DAY CARD TRADITION

Valentine Day greetings became popular during the Middle Ages. During that time, lovers sang or spoke their sentiments. Paper and written Valentines began to be popular at the end of the fifteenth century. The oldest Valentine that exists today was made during that era and is on display in the British Museum.

In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the seventeenth century. In those early years Valentine cards were handmade in a number of different styles. During the 1800s Valentines began to be manufactured in factories.

By the end of the century, printed cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to

express their emotions in a time when direct expression of one's feelings was discouraged. Handmade cards became very rare.

Cheaper postage rates also contributed to an increase in the popularity of sending Valentine's Day greetings. Americans probably began exchanging hand-made Valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began to sell the first mass-produced valentines in America.

Norcross Cards, today known as Hallmark, began to manufacture Valentine Day cards in the early 1900s. During the 19th and 20th Centuries, postcards with Valentine greetings were also produced in categories of humor, romance, and friendship.

Today, due to busy lifestyles and lack of time, we usually buy the Valentine cards that are sent to our loved ones and friends. The Greeting Card Association estimates that a billion Valentine cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year, after Christmas when an estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent. Happy Valentine's Day. ~

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