

Project to ‘revitalize’ sidewalks

El Sobrante downtown to see renovation, trees

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EL SOBRANTE — A renovation of the sidewalks along the stretch of San Pablo Dam Road between Appian Way and El Portal Drive is scheduled to begin in September.

If the San Pablo Dam Road Walkability and Community Enhancement project (SPDRP) does not begin the construction phase by Sept. 30, the funds will be frozen because of the Measure J funding law.

The Measure J funding law states that if the funds collected are not put toward improving transportation projects before the end of the fiscal year, the funds will not longer be available.

Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante (CGES) member Sharon Korotkin said she has attended many El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council meetings regarding the project. The most recent was held on April 14 at 5:30 p.m. in the El Sobrante Library Community Meeting Room.

Korotkin said that during the meeting, the board was on the verge of getting the project funding approved. She said the project is “finally” out of the design phase but it has been in a long process since its creation in 2010.

The project will receive \$2.4 million in funds from three different sources to repave the sidewalks and bring them into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as providing easier access to all pedestrians.

A Contra Costa Transportation Authority application for the project states that funds from Measure J, the Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC), Proposition 1B and local road tax initiatives allocated \$1.4 million, \$700,000, and \$327,000 toward funding the project respectively.

Associate Civil Engineer Mary Halle sent a report to Contra Costa County Public Works Department in District 1 (CCCPWD) Chief of Staff Terrance Cheung regarding the San Pablo Dam Road Project two years ago.

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In the report, Halle wrote that the project will be sizable and require the cooperation of about 40-50 business owners on San Pablo Dam Road. During construction, pedestrians attempting to enter shops built closest to the sidewalk will be obstructed.

Korotkin said it will not only allow people with disabilities to easily dodge trash cans or uneven cracks in the sidewalk, but it will also beautify the street by planting elm trees and potted plants.

She said, "It will revitalize a downtown that is dire need of it."

Contra Costa County District 1 Supervisor John Gioia announced the project during the most recent El Sobrante Stroll, an annual community event where residents and shop owners promote local businesses.

Gioia said, "In a year's time, from Appian Way to El Portal, the sidewalk will be redone to make it easier for pedestrians to walk."

Kim Hazard, a volunteer at the CGES booth who heard Gioia make the announcement over loudspeakers to people attending the El Sobrante Stroll, was excited to hear the news about the reconstruction to the downtown road.

Hazard said the project will be beneficial to the community by stimulating its economy through local business sales once it is completed.

Halle's report states that the construction will continue into the 2015 fiscal year.

Sixty-seven elm trees and 14 planters are planned to be planted in the stretch of sidewalk when the project is completed, according to a landscape concept plans report issued for CCCPWD in August of 2013.

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