

FAIR OAKS BLVD. IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

By Walter Yost

By this time next year, Carmichael residents will have the opportunity to review a draft plan for improving a stretch of the community's main street - Fair Oaks Boulevard between Marconi Avenue and Engle Road.

Steve White, an engineer with the Sacramento County Department of Transportation, said a draft environmental impact report of the improvement project will be available for public comment by fall, 2004.

Following an extensive outreach effort that elicited a diversity of opinions, White said his department has proposed that seven alternatives (including a no-build option) be analyzed in the environmental document.

"We went in with the attitude of providing an alternative for everybody," he said.

After a 30 or 60-day public comment period, a final EIR will be prepared that addresses all questions raised. The county Board of Supervisors will then make the final decision on what should be done along the boulevard, which passes through the heart of Carmichael.

According to the county website, the project proposes to widen Fair Oaks Boulevard from the existing four traffic lanes with a striped center turn lane to six traffic lanes with a raised landscaped median and bicycle lanes. A new traffic signal is proposed at Landis Avenue and existing traffic signals within the project area would be interconnected to improve traffic flow. New street lighting is proposed throughout the project limits.

The project is being paid for by Measure A, a half-cent sales tax approved by county voters in 1998. The first phase of the project, widening Fair Oaks Boulevard between Cypress Avenue and Engle Road, was finished in 2000.

The alternatives for the next phase - besides the no-build - vary from constructing a third lane in both directions, widening the boulevard with frontage roads, and providing sidewalks, traffic signals and landscaping only. Hybrid alternatives, combining features from a couple of alternatives, are also in the draft EIR.

White said that at this juncture there is no preferred alternative.

He said his department has met with members of the Carmichael Community Action Plan team, who are involved in updating the Carmichael's general plan.

"We're basically on the same page," White said.

He said the county has already hired a traffic engineer to assess the traffic impacts of each of the alternatives and will soon hire a noise consultant.

More details on the project are available at the county website:
www.sacdot.com/projects/fairoaks/EIR.asp.

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