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Feb. 13, 2008 - Dupray complains EDH, Cameron road projects ignored

By Noel Stack | City editor | February 12, 2008 15:56

El Dorado County Supervisor Rusty Dupray announced that he now favors incorporation in El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park.

Dupray's comment came Tuesday morning, a day after three of his fellow supervisors approved El Dorado County's five-year capital improvement program for roads, adding back a developer-requested project in Placerville without identifying funding.

The majority of the revenue for road projects comes from the El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park areas 'and now it's being spent in the Placerville area,' Dupray said. By incorporating, the communities could keep the traffic impact mitigation fees collected for their own road projects.

'I now encourage incorporation of El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park, preferably the two communities to incorporate as one,' Dupray said.

Supervisors Ron Briggs, Jack Sweeney and Norma Santiago hand-picked the \$10 million extension of Headington Road from Missouri Flat Road to El Dorado Road out of a list of delayed projects, citing economic development as the driving factor for including it back into the program.

While that project got a reprieve, 15 other projects were eliminated from this year's capital improvement program because of a lack of funding. Ten of those project are in Cameron Park and points west.

Projects delayed due to decreases in funding include widening White Rock Road in El Dorado Hills, an extension of Saratoga Way in El Dorado Hills and various improvements to Highway 50 interchanges at Bass Lake Road, El Dorado Hills Boulevard, Cameron Park Drive, Ponderosa Road and El Dorado Road.

Supervisors Dupray and Helen Baumann, the other 'no' voter, represent most of the El Dorado Hills-Cameron Park area.

Developer Leonard Grado told the supervisors about a retail project he's planning depends on the Headington Road extension. Grado also has a project designed for the area currently occupied by the materials recover facility off Highway 49.

'The combined jobs these two (projects) would bring is 1,200 jobs,' Grado said.

Retailers like Kohl's, Target, Costco and Lowe's have expressed interest in coming to the area, according to Grado.

'We want to partner with the county,' Grado continued. 'Our development goal is to bring retailers to this community.'

The developer said he designed the projects based on the county's previous capital improvement programs that included the Headington Road project and the Diamond Springs Parkway - a connector road from Missouri Flat Road to Pleasant Valley Road. The parkway project remains in the most recent program, listing developer advance contributions of \$31.5 million as the primary funding source.

While not disputing the merits of Grado's projects, Dupray said a lot of developers could make the same arguments for other road improvements.

The county has to develop a road project plan and stick to that plan, argued Baumann. She said projects like the El Dorado Hills Boulevard interchange - an area where economic development has blossomed - get started but not finished and that also economically impacts the county.

'You've got partial infrastructure there, but then we keep moving the focus,' Baumann said.

El Dorado County Department of Transportation Director Richard Shepard said staff uses specific criteria to select where projects go on the priority list. A project ready for construction gets priority over a project in the planning stage; an emergency project takes precedence over a congestion relief project, etc.

Single-family dwelling permits - a major economic engine behind road improvements - dropped sharply over the past two years. DOT's earlier capital improvement programs benefited from 1,200 to 1,500 permits each year in previous years, but the slowdown in the housing market has caused that figure to plummet. The new capital improvement program presented estimates just 600 permits each year for the next five years.

Despite the elimination of several projects to meet the funding gap, Shepard said, 'We still have a huge program to deliver.'

Major projects included in the capital improvement program this time around include Phase 1 of the Silva Valley Road-Highway 50 interchange, a \$9.5 million project, the extension of the carpool lanes from El Dorado Hills Boulevard up the Bass Lake Grade, \$36 million; phase 1B of the Missouri Flat Road interchange improvements, \$30.1 million; and widening Latrobe Road from Suncastr Lane to Golden Foothill Parkway, \$9.9 million.

The next step for the Board of Supervisors is a review, and possible increase, of the traffic impact mitigations fees, which will likely occur sometime in the spring.

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