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Work starts on link to ease traffic flow in El Dorado Hills

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer - *(Published May 21, 2004)*

El Dorado County has launched a \$3 million road project linking El Dorado Hills homes north of Highway 50 and commercial areas to the south.

County traffic planners also predict the project will lessen congestion that commuters face at Highway 50 and El Dorado Hills Boulevard.

"It should get rid of a lot of traffic that goes past my house," said Pete Van Gorp, who walked from his home in the Serrano development to witness the brief groundbreaking ceremony Thursday at the south end of Silva Valley Parkway. "It's a long-needed connection."

Construction is to begin next week on the approximately one mile of roadway that will extend under Highway 50 and connect Silva Valley Parkway on the north with White Rock Road to the south. Completion is expected by the end of the year.

"We hope it will divert quite a bit of traffic from the El Dorado Hills Boulevard interchange area," said Liz Diamond, El Dorado County's interim transportation director.

About 30,000 vehicles per day travel that stretch of El Dorado Hills Boulevard-Latrobe Road, she said. Traffic backs up at intersections and on Highway 50 offramps during commute hours.

Although Diamond said it is difficult to estimate how much of that traffic would shift to the Silva Valley Parkway-White Rock Road extension, 5,000 to 10,000 vehicles are expected to use the new roadway each day.

The extension, consisting of a two-lane roadway with bicycle lanes, is a first step toward a freeway interchange planned at Silva Valley Parkway, but Diamond said the interchange will be three to five years down the road.

Parker Development Co., developer of Serrano, advanced the money for the current project, which includes installing water and sewer lines for the El Dorado Irrigation District.

About half the costs are for the roadway and half for sewer and water facilities, Diamond said. Parker Development will be reimbursed through fees paid to the county and irrigation district as new homes are built.

The extension was supposed to have been built when "they got 750 rooftops in Serrano," said John Sorensen, a member of the El Dorado Hills Area Planning Advisory Committee.

The development has about 2,800 homes now, said Kirk Bone, Parker Development's government affairs director.

Faced with rapid growth and increasing congestion, "the county started putting high priority on traffic

improvements in El Dorado Hills and got all the big developers, not just Serrano, to up-front the money," said Harriet Segel, an area planning advisory committee member.

Bone said Serrano also will begin construction this summer to extend Serrano Parkway east to Bass Lake Road. Completion should coincide with the opening of the Silva Valley Parkway extension to White Rock Road.

In addition to relieving congestion on El Dorado Hills Boulevard and Latrobe Road, the two projects will make travel easier for Bass Lake-area residents, Diamond said. Many parents in that area, she said, now have to take circuitous routes via Green Valley Road or Highway 50 to get their children to schools on Silva Valley Parkway.

About the Writer

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