



February 2015

Last month I provided a summary of the issues and policy areas of primary focus for me in the coming year. This month I get into more detail and provide updates on a couple of those issues - the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane Project, and the Ross Valley Flood Control and Watershed Program. I've written about both these projects in the past, but progress in recent months warrants an update. I've also included information about several recent home-grown community efforts to address neighborhood street safety and congestion concerns.

You can find more information on these topics and more by going to my website and clicking on [Current Issues](#). And for a broader update and highlights of major policy decisions made by the Board of Supervisors over the course of the last year, please see [Marin County 2014 Year in Review](#).

As always, please never hesitate to contact me with your comments, questions, concerns on these or any other issues. Email krice@marincounty.org or call 415-473-7825. You can also connect with me by "liking" my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice.

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Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane Project

The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane Project is a critically important element to relieving the central Marin p.m. traffic jam which not only backs up Ross Valley residents trying to get onto Sir Francis Drake, but folks from throughout the county and beyond.

The good news is that the project is fully funded and has been identified as a priority by Caltrans (owner of the bridge), by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Bay Area Toll Authority (the primary funders of regional transportation improvements) and by both Marin and Contra Costa Counties, whose residents feel the pain every day of the constrained capacity on the bridge.

The bad news is that the project is more complex than a mere paint-job, restriping the bridge deck to accommodate three lanes. Approaches on both the east and west ends of the bridge require reconfiguration and structural improvements to ensure both safety and capacity, with a major hold-up being the need to move a massive retaining wall on the Contra Costa end of the span. These projects require engineered design, must go through legally mandated environmental review, and involve permitting from various resource agencies. That all adds up to time. Early estimates were for a three-plus year timeline - far more time than seems reasonable given the scope of the project.

Hence a full-court press led by Supervisor Steve Kinsey, Marin County's representative on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), along with local, regional and state officials including myself, to pressure the responsible agencies to shorten the process.

The agencies listened. MTC and the Bay Area Toll Authority in February agreed to proceed simultaneously with design and environmental review shaving potentially one year off project timeline - welcome news to all.

Going forward, the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane Project provides an opportunity to not only relieve traffic congestion in an increasingly congested commute corridor, but also for government and public agencies to demonstrate their ability to be creative, to collaborate, to work effectively for the public which they serve, to get a much needed project done, safely, efficiently and in compliance with all regulations, in a reasonable amount of time.

Ross Valley Flood Protection Projects Ready to Move Forward

Having witnessed the aftermath of the 2005 flood which impacted downtowns and neighborhoods of Fairfax, San Anselmo, Ross, Kentfield and Larkspur, I have a strong personal commitment, along with many others, to helping the Ross Valley community protect itself from future flooding.

Though the Program was formally adopted and the storm drainage fee adopted in 2007, legal challenges delayed progress until 2009. Since that time, a sophisticated hydraulic modeling system of the watershed has been created, a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) developed and adopted, a 10-year work plan determined (a subset of the CIP) and \$30

million in grants secured towards six of the 13 initial projects identified in the 10-year work plan.

Now, with full funding in place and feasibility studies completed, the first major projects of the Ross Valley Flood Prevention and Watershed Program are entering the environmental review, design and public review processes. Others are not far behind. I provide updates on four major bridge replacement projects below, plus good news per the long frozen Army Corps project in Ross.

San Anselmo and Ross bridges in line for replacement

Ten bridges along the main tributaries to and primary channel of the Corte Madera Creek create constriction points and severe out-of-bank flooding during smaller as well as the larger 100 year (and greater) storm events. These bridges are identified for replacement as part of the 10-year work plan.

Four of those bridges/constriction points - the Winship bridge in Ross, and Sycamore, Nokomis, and Madrone bridges in San Anselmo - were awarded Caltrans grants and are now fully funded. The Caltrans grants will cover over 70% of the estimated \$13 million total cost to replace them and the balance will be funded by the local Ross Valley flood fee.

Engineering design and environmental review launches this year, with construction anticipated to begin in 2018.

Army Corps project in Ross gets green light after decades in limbo

The Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Corte Madera Creek Flood Control Project was designed and partially constructed in the late 1960's. The first three units of the project were completed by 1971, but work on Unit 4 in Ross was halted in 1972 (and thankfully so) by community opposition over environmental issues as the project proposed a concrete channel from Ross all the way up to Fairfax.

In the 40+ years since, environmental science, engineering and community values have evolved, allowing for the development of environmentally sensitive alternatives for completing the project. However, the project has lain dormant for years, hamstrung by lack of local funding, recession and congressional budget stalemates. But the tide is turning. Just this month, the USACE allocated \$400,000 to the Corte Madera Creek Flood Control Project (Unit 4) allowing the project to progress after decades of minimal progress. This funding signals serious and renewed interest on the part of the Army Corps to finally complete this project.

I am extremely pleased to have this project moving once again. Completion of the project will remove a major constriction point and cause of flooding for residents in

Ross, Kentfield and Larkspur, and is critical to the success of the broader Ross Valley program.

Going forward

Concurrent with the bridge and USACE projects, grant monies have been secured for both the Phoenix Lake and Memorial Park detention basin projects, though they are not fully funded to date. The detention basins are critical to the overall project, providing the capacity required to hold back flood waters that the natural creek channel cannot contain during major storm events, even with constriction points (i.e. bridges noted above) removed.

As we move forward, local public works staff and the county flood control division will continue to apply for grant funding to fully fund all necessary projects, while moving forward with those that are.

For more information on these projects and other program elements, visit www.rossvalleywatershed.org. Opportunities for public input and involvement are available at [Flood Zone Nine Advisory Board](#) meetings, at local council meetings as they consider program elements specific to their jurisdiction, and at community and neighborhood meetings hosted by Flood Zone 9 staff. The next Flood Zone Nine meeting will be held on March 17 at 7pm at San Anselmo Town Hall – for agenda and staff report, check website the week before the meeting or [subscribe](#) to receive meeting updates/notices.

Local Safe Street Efforts – a Community Endeavor

Given widespread concern about traffic, safety for all modes of travel, and reducing school-related traffic congestion, several “Safe Streets” committees have formed over the past year in the Ross Valley. These groups are a collaboration of homeowners associations, local schools, law enforcement agencies, Safe Routes, county and towns committed to making our streets a safer place to be.

The purpose of the committees’ work is to: provide a community forum to discuss larger traffic concerns and potential infrastructure improvements; to develop a coordinated, much-needed public outreach and education campaign reminding all drivers to slow down, park carefully, be cautious especially during school drop off and pick up times; to reinforce and support efforts encouraging walk/bike/carpool to school, work and just generally getting around; to include and leverage the education and enforcement muscle law enforcement can bring to this community effort.

Currently, Safe Streets committees have been formed in San Anselmo/Sleepy Hollow for the Butterfield Corridor, in Oak Manor in Fairfax for the Oak Manor Corridor, and in

the McAllister area next to Bacich School in Kentfield. Both the Butterfield Corridor Safe Streets and Oak Manor Safe Streets committees have public outreach campaigns planned the last two weeks in April, including e-blasts to residents and school parents, creative signage, and additional Safe Routes activities. All three groups are exploring infrastructure improvements ranging from “No Stopping” signs to parking restrictions during school hours to making streets one way.

Thank you to these communities for taking an active role in their neighborhood’s safety. If you are interested in starting such an effort in your area, please [contact me](#) and my office will help you get started. You can visit the [Butterfield Corridor Safe Streets webpage](#) to learn more about their efforts.

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