

Brentwood Press

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On a rainy Monday, local transportation officials had a bit of brightness to share.

Caltrans last month transferred control of the former “Highway 4” to Oakley and Brentwood, so those cities can more efficiently maintain their Main Street and Brentwood Boulevard, respectively. And the former “Highway 4 Bypass” was designated “State Route 4.”

Politicians celebrated the changes at The Streets of Brentwood lifestyle center, adjacent to the former Bypass. Contra Costa Transportation Authority Executive Director Randell Iwasaki said new signage reflecting the changes will be installed throughout spring and finished by April 16.

“It’s a great sunny day for East County,” said Brentwood Mayor Bob Taylor, also the Chairman of the State Route 4 Bypass Authority. “Most of the funding came from the private sector as they built new homes in our communities. I would also like to thank the residents and development community who have contributed with their pocketbooks to make this a success.”

The moves help East County in several ways: Oakley and Brentwood can now make street repairs and improvements to their primary thoroughfares without getting bogged down in the Caltrans approval process; freight traffic can now use the former “Bypass,” easing congestion in downtown and residential Oakley and Brentwood; and Oakley can host festivals and parades down Main Street.

Oakley City Councilman Jim Frazier, a longtime East County transportation advocate, believes the achievement will positively influence other local projects, such as the renovation of Vasco Road, which connects Livermore and Brentwood.

According to Iwasaki, the work being done to expand Highway 4 to four lanes, including a median for eBART tracks, represents an investment of roughly \$1.3 billion in East County transportation. The projects were paid for by fees from new development in East County.

“You all got together and had a vision for providing transportation to accommodate future growth,” Iwasaki told attendees. “That takes a lot of vision, a lot of political fortitude.”

The news would have been even better received had California not nixed redevelopment agencies (RDAs), which collected property tax. Before that decision was made (as a way to help balance the state budget), Brentwood planned to make between \$25 million and \$40 million worth of improvements to Brentwood Boulevard.

Pam Ehler, the city’s finance director, said in January that officials are still brainstorming ways to renovate the street.

Frazier has previously remarked that that since Oakley has money in reserve and revenues will grow once the Oakley Generating Station power plant becomes operational in three or four years, the decision to kill RDAs shouldn’t hurt Oakley much.

Several officials applauded all parties involved in the Highway 4 transfer for working together to improve the local quality of life. “We’re seeing great progress in the last few years, and it’s just been phenomenal what’s happened,” said Congressman Jerry McNerney. “We’re going to continue to see this because there’s a lot of great people involved. This kind of infrastructure project is exactly what we need to improve the economy.”