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BYPASS, **eBART** AMONG TRAFFIC PLANS  
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EAST COUNTY- When the Highway 4 bypass is done, our problems will be solved, they say. When we get **eBART**, our commute nightmares will be over. This has been the mantra of city engineers, politicians and even commuters in East County.

"We are sort of in our teenage phase," said David Piepho, a Discovery Bay town council member. "We've got some growing pains to endure, and we all think these new projects will ease a lot of that."

The Highway 4 bypass, now under construction and slated to open by the end of 2007, will link Central Contra Costa to far East County, via Brentwood's Marsh Creek Road. The \$187 million expressway will ultimately be a 13-mile shortcut for drivers who have been using city streets in Antioch, Brentwood and Oakley to get to their jobs or major shopping hubs in Central County.

**eBART**, a new light-rail system that will link East County with BART's Pittsburg-Bay Point station, is a little further off, with construction scheduled for 2010.

When the bypass is done, a portion of Brentwood's Marsh Creek - which will be part of the highway - will finally be able to handle the commuters it already sees every day. Antioch's Lone Tree Way won't be so congested with commuters, and it will handle with much finesse the shopping populations it was built for.

Antioch's Deer Valley, a once-rural road that links Brentwood and Antioch, is undergoing a facelift largely because of the new Kaiser hospital being built there - paid for through developer fees. New housing projects in the area are also expected to result in changes in the country roadways in that area.

"The major repairs come when the road is pulled into a larger project, like the bypass or like a new development," Piepho said.

Antioch's Ed Franzen, a city engineer, said James Donlon Boulevard, a popular commute route to Central County, will also be reconstructed to handle its "commute alternative" status.

"One lane is not holding up very well under all that commute traffic, so we're going to fix it," Franzen said.

The future, say all these officials, will be much smoother.

"That said, I think our internal streets have held up pretty well," said Brentwood engineer Brian Bornstein. "It's when we get outside the city limits that we see problems."

Piepho said his top examples of problem commuter routes are Marsh Creek and Walnut Boulevard, and then farther up Walnut, at Camino Diablo Road.

"Because those intersections aren't planned well, I've seen people cut through on the shoulder to turn right. But, those shoulders weren't built to withstand that."

Because Piepho commutes like many of his constituents, he calls himself a "personal victim of inadequate East County Roads."

"But I'm also a realist, and this is a natural transgression; we're growing up as a region. And things don't happen simultaneously when you have growth. We need to fix the roads, yes, but residents also need to be patient and drive responsibly until that happens."

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