

## **'Help is on the way' for road repairs**

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HUMBOLDT – A long-awaited state law implementing tax and fee increases for improving state highways and local roads goes into effect Nov. 1, one of many legislative developments the county is tracking.

At its Oct. 3 meeting, Humboldt's Board of Supervisors was updated on state and federal legislative actions. Karen Lange and Paul Yoder of the Shaw, Yoder, Antwih firm, the county's legislative consultant, highlighted the effects of the state's new transportation funding law.

Senate Bill 1 was approved last spring and Lang said it carries out a plan to increase revenue for highway, road and street maintenance.

"Help is on the way, folks," she told supervisors.

Part of the plan is to raise the gasoline sales tax rate by 12 cents per gallon. The tax on diesel fuel will be hiked by 20 cents.

In addition to the gas tax increase, SB 1 allows portions of new vehicle license and registration fees to be used for road maintenance and repair. Lange said the "total package" is expected to generate about \$6 billion a year.

The new taxes and fees go into effect Nov. 1.

"There will be enough revenue to hopefully start tackling the backlog of road deterioration that has been going on," said Lang.

She also summarized two other major areas of state lawmaking – addressing affordable housing shortages and extending the state's cap and trade law, which establishes a permitting system for greenhouse gas emissions.

Under SB 2, The cost of recording "specific documents" at the County Recorder's Office will rise by \$75 per document for up to three documents, said Lang. The bill seeks to fund affordable housing projects.

Another bill, SB 3, seeks funding to deal with what Lange described as the state's "housing crisis" through a \$4 billion bond.

Another bill, SB 35, toughens enforcement of mandated regional needs housing shares.

The cap and trade extension is a "big one," Lang said, and supplants a previous approval that only gained a simple majority vote. The vote was re-done and gained a two-thirds majority.

The state's draft budget will be released on Jan. 10. Yoder said the current budget's status is about to be updated and will influence Governor Jerry Brown's upcoming budget decisions.

He said the 2018 election year will include the \$4 billion housing bond mentioned by Lang and a \$4 billion parks and water bond. Brown will soon enter his last year as governor and Yoder said that throws a "wild card" into the mix as he makes closing decisions.

One of Brown's spending decisions will be defense of SB 1, the transportation funding bill. Yoder said its approval was "a hard-fought battle" and it will be legally challenged.

There are two ballot measures being advanced but neither one includes "claw back" measures to recoup tax and fee revenues, he continued.

Even if one of the challenges succeeds, a minimum of 14 months of revenues will be collected. "If one of those repeal measures passes, then that 14 months will be the sum total but there wouldn't be a give back or a claw back provision," Yoder said.

But he added that a third measure is emerging and there's a chance that the others may be amended to include a "claw back."

The county has recently gained leadership status among others in the state. Supervisor Ryan Sundberg noted that Supervisor Rex Bohn is now vice-chair of Rural Counties Representatives of California and Board Chair Virginia Bass will be president of the California State Association of Counties.

Sundberg said the representation gives Humboldt County "a bigger voice."

He holds state-level post himself, representing the region on the California Coastal Commission.

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