

The following FAQs were prepared to help answer your questions about “why is it taking so long to repair the sinkhole?”

Background:

On July 1, 2016, the Town of Moraga was notified by Caltrans representatives that the Town’s application for funding assistance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the initial emergency response and permanent repair of the sinkhole on Rheem Boulevard at Center Street was approved. The Town’s acceptance of FHWA financial assistance requires the Town to follow strict FHWA guidelines and approvals for each step of the process. The Town has been diligently working with Caltrans Office of Local Assistance, who administers the federal funds.

How Does the Emergency Relief Program Work?

The decision to seek financial assistance under the FHWA's ER program rests with the State highway agencies [Caltrans]. Local highway authorities [Town of Moraga] do not deal with the FHWA directly. Instead, they must make their application for possible funding through their State highway agency [Caltrans]. It is the State highway agency's option to determine whether it will seek ER funding for the repair of Federal-aid highways, regardless of which jurisdiction - State or local - they are under.

The following outlines the ER process.

Restore Essential Service: State and local highway authorities are empowered to immediately begin emergency repairs to restore essential traffic service and to prevent further damage to Federal-aid highway facilities. Properly documented costs will later be reimbursed once the FHWA Division Administrator makes a formal finding that the disaster or catastrophic failure qualifies for funding under the ER program. On the other hand, permanent repairs require prior FHWA approval, which is only given after the FHWA Division Administrator makes a formal finding that ER funding will be provided for a disaster or catastrophic failure.

Governor's Proclamation: A formal proclamation of the existence of an emergency is made by the State Governor. A Presidential declaration, if issued, can also serve this same purpose. [To view the Governor’s proclamation, please visit this webpage: <http://www.moraga.ca.us/images/Rheem%20Sink%20Hole/Att%20G%20-%20Proclamation%20of%20a%20State%20of%20Emergency.pdf>]

Preliminary Notification: The State highway agency notifies the FHWA division office (the FHWA's field office in each State) by letter that it may be seeking ER funding. This is known as a "letter of intent" and is usually done as soon as it is evident that there is eligible damage.

Acknowledgement: The FHWA division office acknowledges receipt - in writing - of the State highway agency's letter of intent.

Damage Assessments: The State highway agency, in cooperation with FHWA division office engineers, undertakes damage surveys. This may include local authorities where appropriate. Typically, this involves on-the-ground visits of the damage sites to verify the extent of damage and to determine the cost of repairs eligible for ER funding. In some cases, where there is a need to expedite the delivery of ER funding for high-cost disasters, an initial damage survey may be based on aerial fly-overs, news telecasts, and other means of quickly estimating the extent of damage. This initial damage survey is then followed up later with more detailed site inspections.

Formal State Request: The State highway agency submits to the FHWA division office - in writing - its request for ER funding based on the damage assessments and cost estimates.

Division Administrator's Finding: The FHWA Division Administrator makes a decision on the eligibility of repairs for ER funding. If a positive finding is made, the division office submits a request for an allocation of ER funds to the FHWA headquarters office in Washington, DC to cover estimated needs for the current Federal fiscal year. Additional ER funding will be made available to the State as needs arise. [Town of Moraga was notified on July 1, 2016 that their request was approved.]

Implementation of Projects: ER projects are advanced generally in similar fashion as regular Federal-aid highway projects (although FHWA procedures allow many actions to be taken to expedite repair activities). Generally, the State highway agency has the lead in seeing that projects are advanced in accordance with appropriate Federal and State requirements. The total amount of ER funding provided is based on the Federal share of actual costs incurred by the State and local highway authorities to complete eligible repair activities.

What Types of Repairs Are Eligible for Funding?

ER funds can be used for "emergency repairs" and "permanent repairs."

Emergency repairs are those repairs during and immediately following a disaster to restore essential traffic, to minimize the extent of damage, or to protect the remaining facilities. Typical examples are:

- o establishing emergency detours
- o removing slides and debris
- o providing temporary bridges or ferry service
- o regrading of roadway embankments and surfaces
- o placing rip-rap to prevent further scour.

[Town of Moraga reopened Rheem Boulevard/Center Street intersection on May 13, 2016.]

Permanent repairs are those repairs undertaken, normally after emergency repairs have been completed, to restore the highway to its predisaster condition. Remember, permanent repair work requires prior approval by the FHWA division office.

Typical examples are:

- o restoring pavement surfaces
- o reconstructing damaged bridges and culverts
- o replacing signs, guardrail, fences, and other highway appurtenances.

[Town of Moraga anticipates that the permanent repair work will begin after the 2016/2017 rainy season, approximately April 15, 2017, weather dependent.]

For more information, please visit the FHWA Emergency Relief Guide at the following webpage:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/er/guide.pdf>