**Asti Bridge Community Meeting Update - from 01/31/2025**

There was a great turnout in support of the proposed Asti Permanent Bridge for the community meeting held at the Cloverdale Veterans Hall.

**Thank you to The Alexander Valley Citizens League (AVCL) , especially Steve Johnson and Geoff Peters, and all of the volunteers and other board members for their hard work over the past 8 years organizing and coordinating with Sonoma County to make the permanent Asti Bridge a reality.**

**Johannes J. Hoevertsz, Director of Sonoma Public Infrastructure, provided the community with a detailed update as follows:**

* CEQA Environmental work has been completed and approved by the Board of Supervisors.
* $30 million estimated total construction cost.
* 2 years estimate construction timeline once design and permitting are completed and the Board of Supervisors has approved project construction.
  + Design, Permitting, and Open Bidding need to be completed before the project can be fully approved and construction started.
  + Estimates of the timeline discussed at the meeting provide approximately 18 to 24 months to complete the initial phases and then another 2 years to complete construction.
  + A reasonable estimate for final completion of the Permanent Asti Bridge is 3.5 to 4 years from the date that either 1) grant money is received or a 2) special finance assessment district has been created.
* Sonoma County has agreed to limit the property owners' total contribution toward the project to $4 million.
  + In the event of any grant funding being approved, the County has agreed that any grant money would first be used to offset the $4 million property owner contribution.
  + If grant money is approved in the future, the special finance assessment district would be dissolved.
  + For example, if a finance assessment district is created now and grant money is received in 2027, property owners might pay for 2 years of special assessments and then have their assessment district obligation eliminated as long as the grant funding is equal to or greater to the $4 million property owner contribution.
* $4 million required for the final design and permitting work.
* $750,000 has already been spent by Sonoma County to complete the environmental work.
* Right of Way - The County has negotiated with the property owner to the Southeast of the bridge in order to acquire a small right of way section.
  + This will allow the County to install the temporary bridge each summer during construction of the permanent bridge and mitigate some of the concerns of properties close to the Northeast of the bridge.
* Permanent Asti Bridge will be constructed above the current 100 year flood plain.
* Bike and pedestrian paths will be included on the new Asti Bridge with a 2 lane road so that traffic can flow in both directions over the bridge.

**Momentum is on our side and we need to act quickly to move the project through design and into construction. There are 2 options for funding the bridge:**

* 1. Wait for Grant Funding
  + The County has re-applied for a grant but it is unclear when - or if that grant money will be approved. By waiting, we lose momentum and risk losing the political support needed in order to get the Asti Permanent Bridge across the finish line.
* 2. Establish a Special Finance Assessment District Now
  + Establish the Assessment District now and move forward quickly with the design and permitting process.

**The Finance Assessment District Would Work as Follows:**

* $4 million will be split across all of the parcels from Crocker and River Road on the North end of the district all the way South to the parcels just South of River Road and Washington School Road.
* The formula for this allocation would be based on total lot size, usage, and share of benefit to the parcel.
* The average 4 to 5 acre single family home parcel would pay an estimated $588 per year for 20 years in the zone closest to the bridge.
* After 20 years, the assessment district is eliminated. The assessment won't change each year.
* Commercial and large agricultural properties will be assessed at a higher rate.
* There are 3 proposed zones for the district,
  + 100% in the zone closest to the bridge
  + 87% in the Mid-River Road zone
  + 75% in the area in the North River Road zone
* Based on the zone that the parcel is in; the assessment would be calculated. For example, a 4 to 5 acre single family home parcel on Highland Ranch Road - in Zone 1 - would pay the full $588 per year. A similar parcel at the North end of River Road in Zone 3 would pay 75% of $588 - or $441. And, a similar parcel in Zone 2 would pay 87% of $588 - or $511.
* Once the finance assessment district is approved, the County can issue a bond based on the Special Finance Assessment District and quickly continue the design work, creation of plans and apply for permits.

**Why is a Permanent Asti Bridge Critical Now?**

All of the properties in the area East of the Russian River in Cloverdale and Asti will benefit from having 2 means of access, From both the Permanent Asti Bridge and the First Street Bridge.

* Time is not on our side - waiting will increase property owners and the county's costs
  + Johannes estimates that construction costs will increase approximately 3.7% each year.
  + The LA Fires are likely to cause a significant spike in construction costs over the next few years and only add to increased costs of construction long term.
  + Sonoma County might decide not to continue installing the Asti Summer Bridge.
  + The cost of this project will only increase over time and the cost of installing and removing the Asti Summer Bridge will also continue to increase over time.
* Fire Safety
  + The LA fires and our own recent fire events really highlight the need for a Permanent Asti Bridge for fire safety and emergency ingress and egress.
  + The entire area East of River Road in the 95425 Zip Code will benefit from having 2 means of ingress and egress in the event of an emergency.
  + In the event of a mass evacuation, this could allow for one bridge to be used to exit the area and the other bridge to be used for first responders to enter the area.
  + Fire season is no longer only during Summer and Early Fall. It is year-round.
* Fuel Costs and Mileage Savings
  + Annual fuel costs and reduced mileage for many property owners may completely offset the proposed assessment.
* Insurance Savings Potential
  + Recent CA State law allows insurance companies to utilize a computer program to determine specific risk profiles of individual properties and set rates based on individual property risk.
  + Having a permanent Asti Bridge crossing would likely result in a reduced risk profile for the properties in the assessment district and a resulting lower relative premium.
* Increased Property Taxes for the County from increased property values with a permanent Asti Bridge. Most real estate economists estimate at least a 10% increase in property values with a permanent Asti Bridge.

Geoff Peters is coordinating a first-class mail announcement to all of the property owners inviting them to the next community meeting from 2:00 to 3:30 on March 8, 2025.

Erik Terreri has obtained a list of parcel numbers, addresses, property owner names, mailing addresses (if different), email addresses, and phone numbers for the parcels in the area. Erik is working on an online poll for all of the parcels in the proposed assessment district.

Of the 296 parcels obtained, I have received 125 emails and 257 phone numbers. I will be updating this list with additional emails that I have for some of the property owners in our area.

The results of the poll will help identify the property owners that are supportive of the project and those that would like to receive additional information.

This information can be used to conduct person to person outreach and ensure that the finance fee assessment district passes.

**Here's a link to the County's website with information on the new Permanent Asti Bridge:**

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/development-services/sonoma-public-infrastructure/road-projects/projects-in-planning/permanent-asti-bridge>

**The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2025 at the Cloverdale Veterans building at 2pm.**