

Bob Walter: E-mail captures reader's frustration with Old Auburn Road project

By Bob Walter -

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Sewer quiz: And the e-mail of the week, maybe of the year, comes from Citrus Heights reader Chuck Percifield. It was so good that I will forgive Chuck for calling me "Mr. Walter," who was my dad. This is a first-name column.

"Question: What do the Golden Gate Bridge, the Empire State Building, Yankee Stadium and the Eiffel Tower have in common?

"Answer: They all took less time to construct than the sewer project on Old Auburn Road."

Chuck continues: "Why is this project taking so long? The roads have been torn up on Old Auburn Road between Sunrise and Auburn Boulevard for a year and a half. Most of the time, no visible work is being done....

"Who is responsible for finishing this work? ... Is there any end in sight?"

I could have – and will, honest – made a couple of calls and gotten some kind of answer for Chuck, but some reader remarks deserve to stand alone.

Heck, I didn't even check to see if his far-flung examples really were built faster than the lingering sewer project.

Stay tuned. ...

Second column includes response to above assertions...

By Bob Walter - bwalter@sacbee.com

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Big dig: Response was quick and informative to the recent item in which Citrus Heights reader Chuck Percifield questioned the pace and apparent lack of progress on the massive sewer project on Old Auburn Road.

Chuck wrote a wonderful e-mail, comparing the project to Yankee Stadium, the Eiffel Tower and other landmarks and wondering which took the longest to construct.

City Council members Jeff Slowey and Jeannie Bruins checked in right away, reminding me it is a Regional County Sanitation District project and not the city's. They also explained how misguided the item was.

Jeannie, who sits on the sanitation district board, said the massive project is right on pace.

"It's awkward and it's messy. ... We were not looking forward to it, but it has to be done," she said.

Bernie Galvin, district spokeswoman, said the \$52 million, 5.3-mile project actually is ahead of schedule.

One reason progress seems slow, all of them said, is that almost all the work is being done as much as 62 feet underground.

"It might not always be evident to the public," Bernie said, "but I guarantee you that something always is going on."

Along with a compendium of info and statistics that would reach across Old Auburn, Bernie offered some "fun facts" to answer Chuck's quiz:

"Eiffel Tower, constructed in two years, two months.

"Golden Gate Bridge, constructed in four years, three months.

"Empire State Building, constructed in 15 months.

"Yankee Stadium, constructed in 11 months.

"We are very pleased to be listed among these great constructions! However, please bear in mind all these projects were built above ground and without the environmental, health and safety restrictions modern-day construction requires."

Meanwhile, Citrus Heights reader Ric Noell chimed in with a long e-mail boosting the project and the conduct of its crews.

"Given the magnitude of this project," Ric wrote, "I think the construction crews have been moving as quickly (or) more quickly than we could have hoped.

"This project has been inconvenient for many people ... but not nearly as much as NOT doing the work would be in the future."

Councilman Jeff said much the same: "The alternative to not updating the sewer system is a stinky topic at best."

In any event, Chuck, it was a great e-mail. ...