

Panels may get say on streets
By Rick Orlov
Staff Writer

Monday, February 07, 2005 - NORTH HOLLYWOOD -- Mayor James Hahn said Monday that if re-elected, he will give advisory neighborhood councils a say in spending about 15 percent of the city's \$51 million street repair budget.

Hahn said he would set aside \$100,000 in gas tax revenue for each of the 85 neighborhood councils so they could decide which streets should be repaired first. He rejected suggestions that the March 8 election influenced his announcement.

"I believe that my responsibility is doing the job people elected me to," Hahn said. "It has nothing to do with the election. I think if you do a good job, people will recognize that."

Under the plan, the city Bureau of Street Services would assess the conditions of all streets within the jurisdiction of a neighborhood council, which would decide which projects should get priority.

Street Services Director Bill Robertson said he has already worked successfully with neighborhood councils, and that the plan would allow his agency to identify and improve the streets where there are the most complaints.

"We think this will help us develop an ongoing program to improve streets, one not affected by changes in the economy," Robertson said.

Hahn has doubled street repairs to 300 miles each year, although they are only being slurry-covered, not fully repaved.

Former Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg, one of Hahn's major opponents in the upcoming election, issued a statement questioning the fairness of the program, since the size of each panel's jurisdiction differs.

"Is it fair that the 10,000 residents of Toluca Lake get the same dollars as the 100,000 residents of Pacoima?" Hertzberg asked.

Hahn said he was trying to be equitable and hoped the program would help foster more neighborhood councils around the city.

"I hope we get more neighborhood councils," Hahn said. "This will let neighborhood councils make the decision on how money should be spent in their community."