

## **\$336.6 million allocated for San Gabriel rail project**

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SAN GABRIEL - The California Transportation Commission voted unanimously Wednesday to allocate more than \$336 million to build a 1.4-mile railroad trench and roadway bridges here as part of the Alameda Corridor-East rail project.

The San Gabriel project is the largest single highway-railroad grade endeavor in the ACE plan, ACE officials said in a written statement. Other local officials said the project will create thousands of jobs - good news for a county in which the unemployment rate is 12.4 percent.

The project will drop railroad tracks into a trench below street level, and build bridges allowing traffic to move freely above the tracks at four streets.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, who is also vice chair of Metro, applauded the vote.

"Constructing the San Gabriel trench will create thousands of new jobs, relieve congestion, reduce air pollution caused by idling cars blocked by trains at grade crossings and improve the quality of life for our San Gabriel Valley residents," he said.

"Naturally, we're pleased and excited and looking forward to getting going," said ACE CEO Rick Richmond.

While the agency was confident the funds would be allocated, Richmond said the time frame was unclear until Wednesday's vote.

ACE can now begin the process of soliciting bids for the work, he said.

"We'll be starting a (contractor) pre-qualification process by the end of the week," Richmond said.

ACE hopes to award a bid to a contractor by next spring, kicking off three and a half years of construction, officials said.

"We've had strong support with our local officials, and our state and federal delegations," Richmond said. "We're so glad it's translated into real progress."

As part of the project, bridges over the trench will be built at Ramona Street, Mission Road, Del Mar Avenue and San Gabriel Boulevard, officials said.

"The streets carry an average daily traffic total of 89,740 vehicles, intermittently blocked by the passage of 14 daily Union Pacific Railroad freight trains and six weekly Amtrak passenger trains," the statement said.

In addition to speeding up traffic, "The project will reduce emissions, including greenhouse gases, by eliminating vehicle idling when train gates are down," according to the ACE statement.

"I'm so excited that this has taken place," said San Gabriel Mayor David Gutierrez, who also sits on the ACE Board of Directors. "The stumbling block has always been the funding."

The funds were raised through the sale of state bonds, authorized by Proposition 1B of 2006, officials said.

"I was, to say the least, very excited that the bond sale went so well a couple weeks ago, and that the California CTC released all those funds," Gutierrez said.

ACE had been considering taking out loans to get the early stages of the project moving forward, Gutierrez said, but with Wednesday's allocation, that won't be necessary.

"In the city of San Gabriel, this is much needed, both from a safety standpoint and a circulation standpoint," he said.

While Gutierrez said there may be some short-term inconveniences during the construction, the project will benefit San Gabriel in the long run.

Like Antonovich, ACE Board of Directors Chairman and Industry City Councilman Tim Spohn said the project will create thousands of jobs.

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Pasadena, said he is "delighted" by the allocation.

"This vital effort will boost economic activity by bringing jobs to our region, while increasing mobility, enhancing safety and reducing noise impacts on homes in our communities," he said.

Twenty grade separation projects are planned through ACE, though more may be added. The price tag of the entire project, affecting 70 miles of railways in eastern Los Angeles County, is expected to surpass \$1.5 billion.