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ACE project creating needed improvements

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Monday July 23, 2012 marked an important milestone for the Alameda Corridor East Project and the San Gabriel Valley. In case you aren't familiar with the Alameda Corridor East Project, or ACE, as it is better known, let me explain. This critical project is adding gates, lights and other safety enhancements at 39 intersections and grade crossings, and constructing grade separations at 22 major intersections along the 70 miles of mainline Union Pacific tracks that cross the southern San Gabriel Valley.

Los Angeles and Long Beach are the busiest container ports in the world and 60 percent of the cargo that enters those ports moves through our Valley to destinations all over the United States.

The benefits to the San Gabriel Valley from hosting this rail corridor are significant. There are 19,600 wholesale and distribution businesses here, making up an important part of the San Gabriel Valley's economy. While our Valley accounts for 16.3 percent of all the businesses in Los Angeles County, almost 24 percent of the County's wholesale and distribution companies are in the San Gabriel Valley. These companies employ 38,900 people with average wages of \$47,440.

But moving this amount of cargo through the region also bring problems - congestion, air pollution, noise, and safety concerns among them. By 2020 it is estimated that \$314 billion worth of trade will move along this corridor every year. To accommodate this volume, longer and more frequent freight trains are planned resulting in a 300 percent increase in Valley traffic delays.

More and longer trains could mean long delays at major intersections creating headaches for businesses and commuters. When you think about what this would mean to the SGV, it is easy to understand why ACE is so important. It allows for the continued economic vitality of the Valley but also protects and improves our road system and the quality of life for the businesses and residents who rely on it.

Since it was created in 1998, ACE has completed safety improvements in the cities of El Monte, Industry, Diamond Bar, Montebello, Pomona, Rosemead, San Gabriel, Temple City, Walnut, West Covina and parts of unincorporated Los Angeles County. Seven intersections have been grade separated in the cities of Industry, Pomona, El Monte,

West Covina and Diamond Bar.

The project is paid for from a variety of federal, state and local transportation revenues including gas taxes, Prop C sales tax (approved by the voters in 1990), 1B transportation bonds funds (approved by the voters in 2006), and Measure R sales taxes (approved by the voters in 2008).

So why is July 23 so significant? The ACE Construction Authority Board of Directors awarded the largest of the project contracts - \$172.6 million for the construction of a 1.4 mile railroad trench for Union Pacific freight and Amtrak passenger trains. This project will grade separate four streets in the City of San Gabriel. This contract will create almost 9,000 jobs over the five years of construction.

Congratulations to the ACE Board of Directors and staff. This is both a much needed transportation enhancement for the SGV and a big economic boom to the region's economy just when we need it most.

