

Transportation Projects in the San Gabriel Valley

By Assemblymember Mike Eng

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) recently released the results of a needs assessment that sheds light on the current condition of our state's transportation system and quantifies just how much investment it would require to meet future demands. The report estimates that it will cost nearly \$536 billion to rehabilitate, maintain and expand our current transportation infrastructure in order to meet our ever-growing demand during the next decade. With only \$242 billion expected in revenue to cover these costs, that means that we could be short by as much as \$294 billion.

For most residents of the San Gabriel Valley, this revelation does not come as a great surprise. The San Gabriel Valley, which is home to over two million residents, is the only region in Southern California that has six major freeways cutting through its geographic boundaries. As a result, we have become all too familiar with the condition of our deteriorating highways, increased congestion, and longer commute times. Subsequently, we have also witnessed our quality of life and environment decline along with it.

Fortunately, there are a number of major transportation projects in the San Gabriel Valley currently underway that directly attempt to tackle this problem. This is largely due to the work of our federal, state and local transportation agencies, stakeholder organizations, and the voters, who have circumvented our politically grid-locked legislative bodies by

approving ballot measures to increase revenues to fund these projects. While all of the projects are of great significance to our region, there are four that I believe are particularly important.

The first major project is the State Route-710 Gap Closure, which is a 4.5-mile gap on the SR-710 between Valley Boulevard on the Alhambra-Los Angeles border and Del Mar Boulevard in Pasadena. The completion of this long-awaited project, currently under environmental review, could have a dramatic impact on not only the San Gabriel Valley, but the entire region. Currently, someone driving northbound on SR-710 freeway from Long Beach to Pasadena must travel through other congested freeway arteries in downtown Los Angeles or over four miles of city surface streets before reaching the City of Pasadena. This will no longer be the case if this gap is closed.

Two other projects of great significance are the Gold Line Foothill Extension and the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project. The Gold Line Foothill Extension, which is a two-phase project to extend the existing metro Gold Line from its current terminus in Pasadena to Montclair, will allow Metro riders to connect with Metro rail and bus lines, Metrolink commuter rail lines and other regional transportation services at Union Station. The Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project, on the other hand, seeks to do the same by extending the Gold Line beyond its current terminus at the East Los Angeles station to communities farther east. Both light rail projects will greatly relieve congestion and improve air quality by getting a greater number of people out of their cars and into mass transit.

Finally, there is the Alameda Corridor East (ACE) project,

which involves multiple mobility-related construction projects throughout the San Gabriel Valley that encompass safety upgrades and grade crossings near train tracks. With train traffic expected to increase by as much as 160 percent in the next decade, the ACE project will undoubtedly have a positive impact on congestion, safety and goods mobility.

While these projects are helping address many of the transportation needs of the San Gabriel Valley, it is obvious that we need to be doing more. For starters, we can urge Congressional Republicans to get behind the President Obama's \$447-billion jobs package, which includes \$60-billion to renovate our nation's roads, highways and other infrastructure. The proposal failed in the Senate last week as a result of a Republican filibuster. From a long-term perspective, we need to implement comprehensive solutions such as those proposed by the CTC. For example, I agree with the report that ensuring sustainable sources of funding for our roadways, multiple modes of public transportation and goods movement should be a top priority in addressing the challenges posed by our aging and underfunded transportation system. Taking on these challenges will greatly depend on how we prioritize our State's needs during a time of scarce resources and political gridlock, which is the question currently facing our State Legislature and Congress. Nonetheless, the reality is that if we do not begin to address these challenges today, we may find ourselves staring at these very same problems ten years from now.



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