

Councilmembers Jeff Parriott, Tim Spohn work to enhance traffic flow, safety, clean air in City of Industry

By Jeff Schenkel
Correspondent

Two local agencies are having a significant impact on transportation in the City of Industry and the entire East San Gabriel Valley. Industry Councilman Jeff Parriott, a member of the Foothill Transit Authority Joint Powers Authority representing 21 cities in the agency's service area, is focusing on mass transit improvements in the area, while Industry Councilman Tim Spohn represents the city as vice chairman of the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority.

Both agencies are important in the City of Industry, the economic hub of the San Gabriel Valley, where more than 2,000 businesses are located employing a work force of some 85,000 each day.

Parriott said Foothill Transit is continuing to look for a permanent park and ride facility in the City of Industry to further encourage commuter bus transportation in and out of the city as a means of conserving fuel, reducing pollution and reducing traffic congestion in the area at the same time.

He said an important part of this involves continuing to look for opportunities to partner with a developer or the city itself in the development of a permanent spot. Until then, the city is continuing to use a temporary location in a civic center parking lot.

An impressive characteristic of the Foothill Transit Board is its ability to gear up as needed to accommodate new demands for transit service.

As a case in point, he cited the \$800 million NFL stadium proposed by Industry's Majestic Realty Co. for a 592-acre site in the City of Industry at the intersection of the Orange (57) and Pomona (60) freeways. The project, if completed as proposed by 2011, will include some 75,000 seats and create an estimated 6,000 new jobs, resulting in an increased demand for mass transit — especially on game days.

"Foothill Transit has been in contact with Majestic Realty," Parriott



Councilman Tim Spohn, ACE vice chairman, checks out a project in the City of Industry.

said. "If the stadium plan does go through, Foothill Transit has another source there of service that they'll be called on to provide."

He said the project will call for the development of additional routes, new scheduling for events and more. Parriott said he was confident the staff at Foothill Transit would be able to ramp up and "extend their high quality of service to events like that."

And, while Foothill Transit already offers special routes to events at the Hollywood Bowl, this would likely be the largest single project in terms of actual ridership that the agency would handle.

He declined to speculate what percentage of football fans would take public transportation to the game.

"I think this would be a whole new ball game," he said, apologizing for the reference. He acknowledged this may require studies by consultants and even some trial and error.

"Foothill Transit has quite a competent staff that is excellent in what they do," he said. "The more we can get involved in something like that the better the traffic situation

will be out there for the residents of Diamond Bar and Walnut, because if it does happen, there's going to be a definite impact on those game days."

"If we can help reduce that congestion by bringing those buses in, I think that's going to be better for everybody," he added.

In other areas, Parriott said Foothill Transit's new Silver Streak bus, a 60-foot articulated bus, some 20 feet longer than a conventional bus, is continuing to generate increased ridership.

The bus, which travels on freeways with only about 5 percent of its total trip on surface streets, offers passengers wireless internet, and uses "smart bus" technology to send data directly from the bus into headquarters — from passenger counters to engine data.

Ridership on one line, Line 690 from Montclair into downtown Pasadena, has increased 20 percent since last year.

"With gasoline prices still staying up there close to four dollars, I think a lot of people go on it and realize what a benefit it is," Parriott said.

Foothill Transit spokeswoman

Felicia Friesema said the agency is continuing to try to meet the demand.

"The challenges we face are obtaining adequate funding," she said. "We can strive to meet growing demand but the big challenge is we are providing a system that is safe and convenient for the entire region."

ACE Vice Chairman Spohn serves on the board of an agency having a significant impact on traffic congestion for the entire San Gabriel Valley.

The ACE Construction Authority was created in 1998 as a single-purpose construction authority by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments to mitigate the impacts of significant increases in rail traffic over 70 miles of railroad tracks in the San Gabriel Valley.

Train traffic here is expected to increase by as much as 160 percent by the year 2020 as railroads continue to dramatically increase shipments from the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles through the San Gabriel Valley and on to the rest of the country.

INDUSTRY

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In anticipation of all of this, ACE was created with a goal of making railroad crossings in the region safer, more efficient and more environmentally "green" than ever before.

"ACE is doing well," Spohn said. "We have the project in Brea Canyon (City of Industry / West Covina), which should be opening next month and we've got the project at Orange and Sunset Avenues (City of Industry), which is under way right now."

The projects are grade separations generally relocating vehicular roadways either over or under the railroad grade to avoid the need for halting traffic at railroad crossings.

He said the Orange and Sunset project should be completed in the next two years.

In addition, a Nogales Street project (City of Industry / Los Angeles County) should be getting under way in 2009.

"Funding on that is just coming together and that project should be ready to take off pretty soon," Spohn said.

The benefits range from safety to enhanced traffic flow to reduction of air pollution from cars idling at railroad crossings because the grade

separations will eliminate train delays of up to 10 to 24 minutes at the busiest crossings.

"With all the jobs that the City of Industry provides for the surrounding communities in the San Gabriel Valley, the grade separations that ACE is doing here in the city will definitely help the traffic situation in the city," he said.

And, he added, the benefits also extend to those who commute to the city or are simply passing through the city.

"One of the most important things is these grade separations allow for emergency vehicles to be able to get where they need to go without having to sit and wait, which so many times can be a matter of life and death," Spohn said, adding that reduction in train versus automobile accidents is an additional significant benefit.

Spohn, appointed to fill a vacancy on the Industry City Council early this year, served as a board member on the city's redevelopment agency for two years before that.

He said his experience there gives him a better understanding of how enhanced traffic flow in the city from the grade separations can have a dramatic impact on the entire economic climate.

"The ACE project is a win-win for the city. It's a win-win for the San Gabriel Valley," he concluded. "The City of Industry is fortunate that these projects are going on here."



City of Industry Councilman Jeff Parriott, member of the Foothill Transit Authority Joint Powers Authority, checks out bus routes with Maria Hernandez, City of Industry Foothill Transit store manager.

Alameda Corridor-East



Cars and trucks travel under a railroad bridge at the ACE Ramona Boulevard grade separation project in the City of El Monte.

San Gabriel Valley

The ACE Project:

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Construct railway-roadway separations at 20 crossings and safety enhancements at 39 crossings
- ❖ **Cuts Congestion**
Eliminate train delays of up to 10 to 24 minutes at the busiest crossings
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Eliminate 221 tons of pollution annually by reducing traffic delays
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