

MID VALLEY NEWS

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New Sunset Avenue Grade Separation eliminates Traffic Congestion and hazards at two Crossings



Industry – Members of Congress, state legislators and officials and local representatives gathered for a ceremony to dedicate the Sunset Avenue Grade Separation project which will eliminate traffic congestion and delays, train-vehicle collision hazards and locomotive horn noise at two mainline railroad crossings in the City of Industry in the San Gabriel Valley.

Currently, freight trains ascend the newly constructed 1.6-mile concrete-walled flyover structure and pass over Sunset and Orange Avenues on 32-foot-high steel railroad bridges. With roadway restoration by the project sponsor, the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority (ACE), nearing completion, Sunset Avenue opened to traffic on last Monday, November 15.

"This is the sixth ACE grade separation project to be opened to traffic and demonstrates the remarkable progress made in delivering the ACE program of 20 grade separation projects and safety improvements at the remaining crossings," said ACE Board Chairman Tim Spohn, a City of Industry Councilman. "By next year, ACE will be under construction or have completed the first 14 grade separation projects, and we can focus on securing the funding needed to complete construction of the final six grade separation projects."

"The ACE grade separation projects are vital for our communities," said Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "Separating roads from railways means less dangerous railroad crossings, less traffic pollution, and faster travel times for everyone living and working in this high-traffic area. I congratulate ACE and local officials on their achievement, and will continue to provide support for these important projects at the federal level."

“ACE is a cost-effective agency that delivers projects on time and within budget and with important community and regional benefits,” said Congresswoman Judy Chu, who toured the Sunset Avenue project while it was under construction. “I will work with my colleagues in Congress to ensure continued federal funding support for the ACE Project.”

Construction of the \$96 million Sunset Avenue Grade Separation Project began in January 2007. The project eliminates the mainline railroad crossing at Sunset and Orange Avenues, which carry 32,000 vehicles and 9,200 vehicles per day, respectively. Before the project was built, motorists experienced significant delays at the two crossings, with traffic blocked at the Sunset Avenue crossing for 37 vehicle/hours per day and at the Orange Avenue crossing for 9 vehicle/ hours per day. Traffic wait times at the two crossings were projected to increase to 54 vehicle/hours and 13 vehicle/ hours per day, respectively, by 2020. Orange Avenue is expected to open to traffic in early 2011, pending review by the California Public Utilities Commission.

“Despite the economic downturn, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are the busiest in the country and among the busiest in the world,” said Assemblywoman Bonnie Lowenthal, Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee. “These much-needed grade separations are an important step in improving regional mobility and continued economic vitality in the face of freight traffic growth in Southern California.”

“The Sunset Avenue Grade Separation will ease traffic gridlock, remove the risk of train-vehicle collisions, and ensure the safety of the students who attend schools in the area,” said Assemblyman Ed Hernandez, Chair of the San Gabriel Valley Legislative Caucus.

“Grade separations help clean our air by eliminating pollution caused by idling cars and trucks at the crossing,” said Assemblyman Mike Eng, a member of the Assembly Transportation Committee.

“The railroad collision tragedy in Chatsworth compels us to renew our commitment to improve safety along rail corridors,” said Assemblyman Anthony Portantino, also a member of the Assembly Transportation Committee. “Most rail-related deaths involve collisions between trains and cars at highway-rail crossings or trespassers on railroads and we have to do a better job of separating cars and pedestrians from trains.”

“We are right to celebrate the accomplishments of the ACE Construction Authority over the last decade,” said Duarte Councilman John Fasana, the San Gabriel Valley’s representative to the LA County Metro Board of Directors. “ACE has secured commitments of local, state and federal funding totaling more than \$1.4 billion—all funding that would have gone elsewhere had it not been for the ACE Construction Authority.”

ACE has completed safety improvements at 39 grade crossings in the San Gabriel Valley, opened five grade separation projects to traffic and is scheduled to begin construction in 2011 on another three grade separation projects, including a project to lower the railroad in a trench and build bridges at Sunset Grade four busy street-railroad crossings in the City of San Gabriel.

The ACE program calls for constructing 20 grade separations as part of a multi-year construction effort to improve safety and reduce congestion at 54 grade crossings across the San Gabriel Valley.