

Nogales Street railroad underpass half way complete

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Construction continues on the Nogales Street Grade Separation Project in the city of Industry Oct. 29, 2014. (Photo by Leo Jarzomb/San Gabriel Valley Tribune)

With construction nearing the halfway point on the Nogales Street railroad underpass, the Alameda Corridor East Construction Authority awarded a new construction contract this week for another underpass on nearby Fairway Avenue.

But CEO Mark Christoffels was quick to note that Fairway won't be closed until Nogales Street opens next spring.

“We don't want to cause any more traffic congestion than we have too,” Christoffels said. “But this way we can start preliminary work on the utilities along Fairway Avenue.”

The head of ACE led a tour of the work on the Nogales Project. The \$117 million project began in May of 2013.

“We’ve done 45 percent of the work so far, right on schedule,” said senior project engineer Charles Tsang.

A large forklift was lifting huge concrete forms from the giant ditch that will become a six-lane underpass. New concrete walls form a new entrance to the popular 99 Ranch Market off Nogales Street.

“The rough texture is called fractured ribbing,” Christoffels explained. “It’s very resistant to graffiti. If you spray paint it, you wouldn’t be able to see an image.”

Construction crews had to remove between 13,000 and 15,000 cubic yards of dirt for the much-needed underpass, according to ACE engineer Kevin Lai.

“When you consider the average dump truck can hold only 6 to 8 cubic yards, that’s a lot of trucks to remove all that the dirt,” Lai said.

Excavators have to dig 30 feet down to make room for the drainage system that will carry rainwater away from the underpass during our infrequent storms.

“We don’t want rainwater to pool at the bottom, so we have to add pumps to pump it out,” Christoffels said.

Tsang said a deep concrete structure will house the three giant pumps needed to run the drainage system. He said the new storm drain is a 10-by-12 foot concrete culvert.

“You could drive your car through it,” Christoffels said.

Earlier, engineers had diverted the busy Union Pacific rail lines that run across Nogales Street. Visitors can see where the old train tracks dead end at the new underpass.

“We moved Union Pacific’s two tracks 30 feet north so we can build the new underpass,” Lai noted. “The new railroad bridge will be wide enough to hold four rail lines when we’re finished.”

The railroad crossing was one of the most dangerous in the country, according to Tsang. And it was the most dangerous in California, recording nine collisions between trains and vehicles in the past decade.

More than 40 freight trains rumble through the intersection every day. They are joined by a dozen passenger trains daily.

“The trains blocked more than 42,000 vehicles that normally drive through the intersection every day,” Tsang said.

Once completed, the underpass will eliminate train collisions as well as delays for motorists and emergency responders.

ACE widened Gale Avenue to three lanes in each direction in that section. It also built a detour with a temporary railroad crossing at Charlie Street.

“The work is going well. I’m hoping we can complete this project early,” Christoffels said.





