

## **Our View: Fund ACE's Baldwin Avenue project**

January 18, 2010

Editorial

The Alameda Corridor East project is viewed, if unfairly, as the dowdy, down-market relation in the pantheon of San Gabriel Valley transportation projects.

It doesn't have the people-moving sexiness of the Gold Line light rail extension as it progresses east through our region.

It doesn't have the to-the-barricades contentiousness of the fight for, and against, the extension of the Long Beach (710) Freeway, tunneled or not.

It's the dull but important scheme to get us moving.

But the emphasis should be on the important part -- because its goal to keep freight flowing from the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles by rail without slowing down surface-street vehicular traffic in the Valley couldn't be more key to making sure we stay mobile.

This month ACE faces a key funding hurdle, and we fully support its effort to secure a federal grant that will quickly allow it to complete the below-grade separation of Baldwin Avenue in El Monte, where traffic is now backed up every time a freight train rolls through.

There is no other real local competition for the Department of Transportation TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) discretionary grant, because no other project is immediately ready to use any federal funds.

Whereas the proposal for \$33.652 million for construction of the Baldwin crossing is completely shovel-ready. With the funds secured, the contract for the job can be awarded this spring, creating an estimated 1,370 full-time equivalent jobs and resulting in long-lasting positive impacts on safety, air quality, congestion relief and economic vitality.

The project would create a Baldwin Avenue grade separation through construction of a roadway underpass beneath the Union Pacific Railroad tracks where they cross Baldwin Avenue, a heavily used thoroughfare in El Monte connecting the 10 and 210 freeways. Trains will use a new double-track railroad bridge on one of the nation's busiest transcontinental freight lines.

Design is complete, state and federal environmental approvals have been made and right-of-way acquisition is nearly complete. Construction will take 18 to 24 months.

We're pleased to join the entire San Gabriel Valley congressional delegation and local Assemblyman Mike Eng, chairman of the Assembly Transportation Committee, in seeking the approval of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood for fully funding the construction of the Baldwin Avenue underpass.