

Train 'flyover' gets conceptual approval in Walnut

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An eastbound train crosses Fairway Avenue just south of Valley Boulevard in Industry on Dec. 9, 2009. Drivers are concerned that vehicles can become trapped on the railroad tracks during heavy traffic. (Staff file photo)



Northbound vehicles cross over railroad tracks on Fairway Avenue just south of Valley Boulevard in Industry on Dec. 9, 2009. (Staff file photo)

WALNUT - The City Council gave conceptual approval this week for a 1.4-mile concrete "flyover" bridge that will elevate Union Pacific freight trains over Fairway Drive along Valley Boulevard at the city's border with Industry.

The \$68 million project is one of 10 grade separations planned for the heart of the San Gabriel Valley by the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority (ACE) to alleviate traffic congestion at train crossings.

"It's time we get our fair share of improvements," said Councilman Tom King, who served two years on the ACE board.

Traffic at the intersection is expected to double in the coming years. And even under current train and vehicle flows, the crossing has had a history of problems.

From 2004 until early 2010, there have been 12 collisions at the intersection, according to official records. It was the site of two train versus automobile wrecks in 2009. One involved a collision with a tractor-trailer left on the tracks.

Traffic at the intersection reaches 19,000 vehicles a day, but is expected to reach 36,000 vehicles per day in about 25 years, ACE spokesman Paul Hubler said. The number of freight trains could rise from 20 a day, measured in 2009, to 40 a day in the near future, he said. Union Pacific may add a second track as imports increase into the ports of Los Angeles, which could significantly add to the number and length of freight trains moving through the San Gabriel Valley to points east.

Every Walnut council member expressed support for the flyover option Wednesday, though they all said they would like to see further study on noise impacts and aesthetics. The council had previously rejected an underpass design because it would have required moving San Jose Creek and would have impacted a residential area, Hubler said.

The railroad flyover would begin its ascent just east of Nogales Street and rise 22 feet at Fairway Drive before returning to grade one-quarter of a mile west of Lemon Avenue. The \$68 million project would be funded by a combination of federal, state and Measure R funds. (Measure R is a half-cent sales tax passed by Los Angeles County voters in 2008 for transit improvements.)



The Walnut City Council gave conceptual approval this week for a 1.4-mile concrete bridge for trains at the city's border with Industry. (Courtesy photo)

Mayor Nancy Tragarz said she has concerns about a massive wall of concrete that would be built as part of the railway bridge.

"I still have concerns about the aesthetics and that very large wall," she said.

City officials also asked about the effect on train noise when locomotives are lifted 22 feet above grade. Hubler said ACE would commission a study on noise dispersion and would also consider adding top sound walls for noise mitigation. The bridge height would be lower than the residential areas nearby.

This project would be similar to a project completed nine months ago at Sunset Avenue in Industry.

"I've stood below the Sunset flyover (when a train was overhead) and was able to hold a normal conversation," King said. "I don't think it will impact residents on noise. In fact, I think it will improve it."

Read more: [Train 'flyover' gets conceptual approval in Walnut - Whittier Daily News](http://www.whittierdailynews.com/news/ci_18673071#ixzz1V7H16CLa)
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