



Trains won't break silence of San Gabriel Mission: New trench ends 143 years of noise

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For the first time in 143 years, trains will not frequently interrupt the silence at the historic San Gabriel Mission, as a 1.4-mile-long railroad trench will go into service next week.

Civic luminaries from across the San Gabriel Valley will on Monday celebrate the movement of the first train through a \$313 million trench, past the venerable mission and under four major streets that have until now been frequently blocked by long freight trains.

Trains will soon transit between the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports, and the rest of the country, in a 30-foot-deep, 65-foot-wide trench. Flashing lights and guard arms at railroad crossings at Ramona Street, Mission Road, Del Mar Avenue and San Gabriel Boulevard will soon disappear.

The rail line will return to grade east of San Gabriel Boulevard, where the new bridge brings the road about two feet due to track elevation.

East of the new trench, the rail crossing at Walnut Grove Avenue remains at-grade and required a shallow lowering of the roadway to match the new railroad grade.

One fifth of the nation's freight containers move through the Alameda Corridor trench, built two decades ago. Near downtown Los Angeles, the train routes split off in three different directions, and overpasses and underpasses are planned along all three branches under plans approved by Congress to speed freight movement and reduce air pollution.

But overpasses and underpasses could not be built near the historic mission, and planners decided to lower the tracks in the center of the San Gabriel Valley.

Loud steam trains first started clanking past the mission on tracks from Los Angeles laid by Southern Pacific in 1874, according to the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority. Dozens of freight trains currently sound horns, activate crossing bells, and blanket the area with loud noise.

Dignitaries will celebrate the new rail trench at 10:30 a.m. Monday, near the San Gabriel Mission, at the Mission Road overpass.

—*City News Service*

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