

Brand new boulevard



Staff photos by SARAH REINGEWIRTZ

RENEE DUBOIS-PAINTER of West Covina waves to officials after riding her bike on Nogales Street, which reopened Sunday as part of the Alameda Corridor East Construction Authority's celebration of the first of 20 grade separations. Below, a vehicle moves down Nogales Street on Sunday. Officials were committed to opening the street before school starts at Nogales High School on Sept. 6.

Nogales Street reopens; gridlock expected to be greatly reduced

By **Nisha Gutierrez**
STAFF WRITER

LILIA SAROSY, 62, of West Covina was part of local history Sunday.

She was the first motorist to drive up and down the newly reopened Nogales Street, which had been closed to traffic for 28 days.

"I have watched this project from the beginning and I think it's going to bring great progress for this community," said Sarosy, who has lived near the project area for 32 years. "I just had to be the first one to drive through it."

The closure of Nogales made way for a grade separation project by the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority, which was committed to opening the street before school started at Nogales High School on Sept. 6.

"They were our priority because they are right up the street and there is such a large number of students who go there," said Rick Richmond, chief executive officer of ACE.

Throughout the monthlong project, school officials said they knew ACE would make the grade and meet the deadline they set.

"We applaud ACE for getting it done when they said they would," said Karen Coggins, assistant principal at Nogales High School. "I am looking forward to the benefit of expedited traffic for our parents and students."

The \$47.5 million project on the West Covina/Industry border required the construction of two bridges — one for trains and the other for vehicular traffic on Valley Boulevard — an underpass for Nogales Street traffic and a loop connector road for motorists to interchange between Valley and Nogales.

ACE officials said one of the major issues addressed by the project was area gridlock due to heavy train traffic, which is now expected to be greatly reduced.

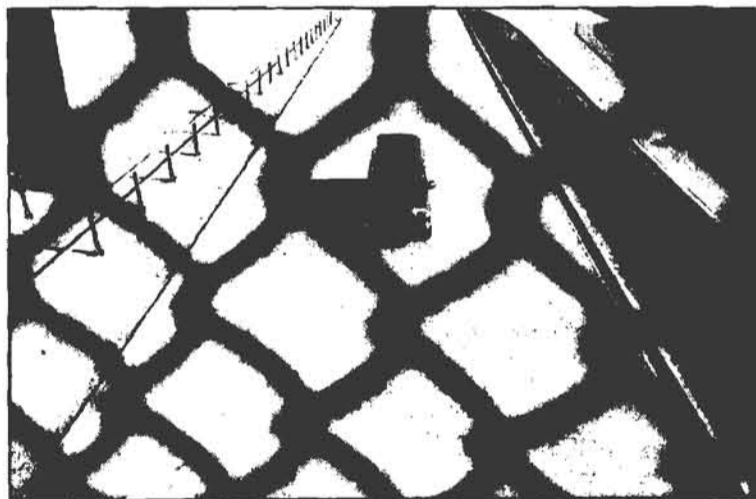
"We know how important this route is to the community and we are happy that we were able to open it back up on time with all the improvements made," Richmond said.

Richard Marino, who has lived near Nogales Street for 30 years, said the area train traffic is a part of life he didn't expect he'd have to get used to.

"When I moved here I thought I was moving to the country, but boy was I wrong," Marino said. "Trains and traffic got worse over the years and I think this ACE project is really God sent."

Engineering and construction crews worked seven days a week, with shifts ranging between 12 and 20 hours, to get the job done.

"We really wanted to get Nogales open as soon as we could so motorists can get where they need to go and not have to worry about detours or stopping for the trains," said Brian Zagorsky, acting superintendent of Bru-



toco Construction. "We had crews with 50-100 members out here daily and I think people will really appreciate what's been done."

Although Marino said he favors the project, he does have one concern: "I am worried that people will speed through the underpass and make it difficult for those coming out of residential streets to get out onto Nogales, but overall I think it'll work out."

Construction officials added motorists should expect two-lane closures over the next month and a half to accommodate miscellaneous construction and landscaping needed to com-

plete the entire project.

The ACE Nogales project began in summer 2003 and is part of the \$910 million overall construction to alleviate traffic congestion due to more trains moving cargo inland from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which ACE officials said is helping to ensure the San Gabriel Valley's economic vitality. In all, ACE will build 20 grade separations throughout the San Gabriel Valley.

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