

Whittier Daily News

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Pico Rivera's last at-grade railroad crossing to be replaced with bridge

Project will eliminate motorists' wait time when trains pass, but Durfee Ave. will be closed during construction



A rendering of the future Durfee Avenue underpass in Pico Rivera. The project is part of the \$1.7 billion Alameda Corridor-East program that will separate at-grade rail crossings in the San Gabriel Valley. (Courtesy San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments)

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Construction of an underpass and train bridge to replace a dangerous railroad crossing on Durfee Avenue in Pico Rivera kicked off Friday as part of a regional megaproject to upgrade a major freight corridor.

The project located between Whittier and Beverly boulevards is expected to take 30 months to complete. It's the 17th of 19 road-rail crossings being upgraded as part of a

the \$1.7 billion Alameda Corridor-East program funded with a mix of local, state and federal money.

A section of Durfee Avenue will be closed during construction, though officials haven't yet determined when that will start and how long it will last. Residents will be given advanced warning of the closure and information about any detours, according to a spokesman from the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, which is overseeing the project.

More than 13,000 vehicles cross the Durfee Avenue tracks each day. An average of 49 trains cross the intersection daily, too, and when the gates come down, cars must wait an average of 2 to 8 minutes, according to the regional agency.

Officials say separating car and train traffic could help save lives. Four people have died in nine collisions that have occurred at the crossing since 1981, according to the Federal Railroad Administration.

The Durfee crossing is the last at-grade crossing in Pico Rivera and located a block north from a fire station.

"The Durfee Avenue project is a long-held top priority for the city," Pico Rivera Mayor Brent Tercero said in a release. "It will result in a safer route to school for many students who live in the area and eliminate all-too-frequent detours for firefighters responding to emergencies from a fire station near the crossing."

Trains will no longer need to blow their horns in the city after the project is complete, according to the San Gabriel Valley agency.

Sixteen percent of the nation's waterborne shipping containers travel through the Alameda Corridor-East on their way to or from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. The twin ports handle 40 percent of the country's shipping container imports, according to the agency.

The main Alameda Corridor runs from the ports to downtown Los Angeles, where train routes split off in three directions, including this eastern corridor. Overpasses and underpasses will be built along all three branches under plans approved by Congress to speed freight movement and reduce air pollution.

In the San Gabriel Valley, studies show that motor vehicle traffic delays would increase threefold without the planned upgrades, according to the regional agency.

The largest project on the eastern corridor was a 1.4-mile long railroad trench in San Gabriel completed in 2017.

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