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Council picks overpass/ underpass option

Staffers say pick will allow environmental report to get done quicker, cheaper.

By ADAM TOWNSEND
Staff Writer

The City Council voted on Tuesday to declare the construction of overpasses and underpasses to separate road and rail traffic as its option of choice in an environmental study.

The resolution will make the remainder of the long and expensive environmental assessment for the project cheaper and faster, said City Administrator Bob Dominguez.

City officials have asserted that lowering the train tracks in a 40-foot trench through Placentia wasn't an option financially, but federal regulations said they had to consider it as an option when assembling an environmental report.

This requirement added considerable time and expense to the Orangethorpe Corridor environmental study, which is now nearly complete.

"Since the city and the council has maintained for a long time that the trench is more or less impossible, we'll be able to designate a preferred option, which would be the overpasses and underpasses," Dominguez said.

The change comes from a recent policy revision at the federal level concerning such environmental reports.

After disbanding the OnTrac development agency set up to administer grade separation projects, council voted to let the Orange County Transportation Authority take the lead on the Orangethorpe Corridor project.

Dominguez said he's keeping his fingers crossed in the hope that OCTA will pay to finish the study, which the city has no money to complete.

He said the OCTA was set to review that possibility in a committee meeting later this month and may vote on it in the next few months.

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