

Close Window

Send To Printer

Railroad underpass project on hold again

By Mike Sprague Staff Writer
San Gabriel Valley Tribune

LA MIRADA - Increasing costs for concrete and steel, as well as rising property values, could delay the construction of a proposed railroad underpass at Valley View Avenue, a city official said Thursday.

It appears now that the cities of La Mirada and Santa Fe Springs, which are working together on the project, do not have sufficient money to fund the entire project, said Steve Forster, La Mirada's public works director.

"We're going to have to go back to Caltrans to seek funding to make up for the shortfall," Forster said at a state-of-the-city presentation sponsored by the La Mirada Chamber of Commerce and held at Holiday Inn Select.

When asked about the prospects of getting additional Caltrans funding Forster said, "I'm optimistic."

"Caltrans is looking for projects that are designed and ready to go. This one can be completed easily, as long as funding is available," he added.

Residents for years have been clamoring for the underpass at Valley View, at the border of La Mirada and Santa Fe Springs. They say an underpass would greatly alleviate traffic congestion at the rail crossing, as well as noise from horns as trains approach the crossing.

La Mirada and Santa Fe Springs officials have worked together to acquire about \$49.1 million in federal, state and railroad company funding for the project. Construction costs had been estimated at nearly \$35 million.

Property acquisition had been estimated at \$3.5 million, but those costs also are likely to go up, Forster said Thursday. Other costs include design, management and track work, to make the final earlier estimate nearly \$48.9million. However, those costs were based on year-old plans and older property values, Forster said.

Officials from both cities have been working to cut costs, but it now looks like construction will cost more than the original estimate, Forster said.

Forster said he doesn't have exact figures on the projected increases. Those numbers are expected to be finalized in about a month.

Construction was supposed to have been about a year away. Officials are in the process of acquiring land for the underpass.

In 2001, the underpass was supposedly fully funded at an estimated cost of \$29.7 million. Then the state, facing a budget crisis, took back the money.

mike.sprague@sgvn.com

(562)698-0955, Ext. 3022