

East Contra Costa transportation projects keep moving east

By Paul Burgarino Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times

Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

ANTIOCH -- Two major transportation projects aimed at reducing gridlocked traffic and commuter headaches in the region continue to head east.

Work will start in Antioch later this month on the easternmost portion of a 10-mile, \$462 million extension of BART service. First up is the building of a maintenance station and parking lot, which will set the stage for the new Antioch-Hillcrest Station.

Meanwhile, construction is under way on the latest leg of the half-billion dollar Highway 4 widening project, which will add four lanes from Lone Tree Way to Hillcrest and a new interchange at Lone Tree.

Local, state and federal elected leaders joined transportation officials and workers Friday morning for a groundbreaking for both projects near the site of the future Antioch-Hillcrest eBART station.

Officials lauded the progress both projects are making.

"The light is at the end of tunnel," Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Stockton, said.

Added state Sen. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord: "This will allow those who commute to get home faster and enjoy a quality of life they haven't been able to."

Officials also noted the projects are bringing in local construction jobs and boosting sales tax.

Dubbed eBART, the extension's diesel-powered trains will carry passengers from BART's terminus at the Pittsburg-Bay Point station to the Antioch-Hillcrest station.

The \$23.6 million project is expected to be done by September 2014.

Work started two years ago on the Pittsburg end of the extension, including building a crossover platform just east of the existing BART station. Passengers will walk across the platform to get from standard BART trains to the smaller eBART cars.

Antioch Mayor Jim Davis said perhaps the new station should be called "Alleluia Station."

"It's been a long time coming. (The transportation improvements) will finally open up East Contra Costa like never before. It's a dream come true."

The eBART service is expected to start by fall 2016.

Work on widening Highway 4 between Lone Tree and Hillcrest has already started, with construction crews clearing the area along the side of the road of tree stumps, smoothing the dirt and adding a large drainage pump near the Hillcrest overcrossing so work can start on the next segment.

Contact Paul Burgarino at 925-779-7164.