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The Exposition Light Rail Transit Line (Expo Line) will travel along the Exposition railroad right-of-way between downtown Los Angeles and Culver City. Nine new stations will be constructed along the 8.6-mile Expo Line route. Click on image for larger view.

PUC decision may delay completion of the Expo Line to 2011

By RICH MARTIN
Web Content Editor

A recent decision by the state Public Utilities Commission to deny the application for a grade crossing at Farmdale will delay the completion of the Exposition Light Rail Transit Line between downtown Los Angeles and Culver City, but transit officials breathed a sign of relief that the news wasn't worse.

The PUC, on a 4-1 vote, rejected an at-grade crossing for Farmdale Avenue next to Dorsey High School because of safety concerns. The PUC did find that a pedestrian overcrossing with Farmdale closed to through traffic was "practicable."

Expo Line Construction Authority Chief Operating Officer Samantha Bricker said that means that a new environmental review on that option will have to be conducted and the crossing application will have to be amended. The PUC will be the lead agency for environmental review under CEQA.

If Farmdale was closed and a pedestrian overcrossing is approved by the PUC, the cost would be approximately \$7 million. Bricker said, but that doesn't include the cost of possible delays.

Bricker said, however, that the decision wasn't a surprise and that environmental studies were already underway, adding that the PUC believes that the pedestrian overcrossing was practicable. "At least we've gotten to a point, after more than two years, of having a better idea of what we're building," said Richard Thorpe, Chief Executive Officer of the Expo Authority.

Bricker said the Expo Line completion date may be delayed and that the Expo Line may open in segments. The first half of the line to Crenshaw, might open in 2010, with the portion from there to Culver City opening the

following year.

The \$862 million Expo Line broke ground in 2006, and 36 of 38 crossings were approved by the PUC. But construction next to Dorsey and Foshay Learning Center delayed when the PUC delayed a decision on the crossings. "This has been going on for quite some time," Bricker said, with the PUC approval process taking two years.



Construction next to Foshay Learning Center near the Western Station site was delayed when the the PUC delayed a decision on the crossings.

The PUC, also on a 4-1 vote, approved the crossing at Harvard near Foshay, giving permission for train tracks to be built directly above an existing pedestrian tunnel under Exposition Boulevard next to Foshay Learning Center.

A PUC administrative judge had originally said pedestrian bridges would be needed at both schools, but the PUC Commission ruled that one at Foshay wasn't necessary. The Los Angeles Unified School District was unhappy with the decision on Foshay, and the school board has 30 days to petition the PUC for a rehearing. The board could appeal that decision through the court system if that were rejected.

Bricker said she thought it was unlikely the PUC would reverse course on the Harvard crossing, adding that an appeal would be difficult as it would have to be appealed to the State Supreme Court.

"The decision was definitely better than what had originally been proposed," Bricker said.