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## BART Safety Upgrades to Start Soon

By Cathy Tyson



Bart bridge over Oakhill Road Photo Cathy Tyson

Got earthquakes? Actually yes, it's no secret that the Bay Area is expected to experience some sort of temblor in the relatively near future. To address earthquake realities the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) has been diligently working on an Earthquake Safety Program to upgrade vulnerable portions of the transit system. The goal is obviously to keep riders and employees safe, but also to keep the system up and running in the event of an earthquake with minimal delays.

With 360,000 daily travelers system wide and approximately 3,270 of those entering at the Lafayette station, keeping trains open for service in the aftermath of an earthquake is vital. According to U.S. Geological Survey analysis there is a high probability of a major earthquake here in the Bay Area within the next thirty years.

A study completed in 2002 was the most comprehensive evaluation of facilities since the original construction. It found that components of the systems most susceptible to damage, that could take years to fix after a major earthquake, are the transbay tube, aerial structures, stations and equipment.

Because the oldest parts of the BART system were built between 1972 and 1976, they are not up to the seismic standards that system extensions - which were built roughly twenty years later - share. The Earthquake Safety Program will focus resources on these older components. The \$1.2 billion price tag for upgrades comes from a variety of sources including voter-approved Measure AA bonds, the California Department of Transportation Local Seismic Safety Retrofit Program, Regional Measure 2 and other sources.

BART riders going to San Francisco can be reassured that the highest priority item was the transbay tube. Upgrades there are complete, and include Vibro-replacement to compact soil backfill, increasing seismic joint capacity and sealing around joints, and new concrete shear walls in the Oakland Ventilation Structure.

Earthquake safety work in Lafayette will be two-fold and is expected to start later this year or early in 2011. "For our elevated structures in Lafayette, the contractor is on board. We will be working where BART crosses over El Nido Ranch Rd., Happy Valley Rd., Oak Hill Rd., First St., and Brown Avenue," said Linton Johnson, BART Chief Communications Officer. The second part of the project is the Lafayette station itself, "BART expects to advertise the contract for bid in November of this year, and construction is expected to begin in early 2011," said Johnson.

Retrofit work will include strengthening the columns that hold up the trackway to withstand a maximum credible earthquake. "Impact is minimal - riders will not notice a thing," said Johnson who added that they are doing the same work right now at West Oakland and not a single customer noticed a difference in the quality of the ride. "The only impact maybe on parking, where construction to widen the base of the columns might take place on parking lot spots for short periods of time," he added.

Construction updates listed on the BART website spell out what work is completed, , work that is in progress and work that is expected to start this year and next. Completion of all the upgrades is expected by 2014. The scope of work includes 17 BART stations and 22 miles of track. For more information go to [www.bart.gov/earthquakesafety](http://www.bart.gov/earthquakesafety).

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