

Community News

Caltrain begins preliminary electrification work in Atherton

Tower construction expected to begin in 18 months



An artist's rendering of what Caltrain's fleet will look like once the commuter rail system switches from diesel to electric power. The trains, dubbed electric multiple units, or EMUs, will connect to wires running above the tracks. Caltrain estimates the electrification project will be finished by 2020. (Courtesy of Caltrain)

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Caltrain has been working this week to locate underground utilities, confirm soil conditions and test cables along its right-of-way through Atherton as part of its electrification project.

City Manager George Rodericks said that Caltrain is working with agencies along the electrification corridor — from San Francisco to Tamien Station in San Jose — to execute agreements for the work.

“The town’s effort on this was suspended while the CEQA lawsuit progressed,” said Rodericks, but “now that that has completed, Caltrain has re-approached the town regarding the agreement,” which covers issues such as encroachment permits, lay-down construction areas, truck routes, noise and construction times.

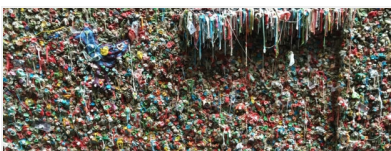
Town staff is working with Caltrain on the agreement, said Rodericks. The actual work of erecting the catenary towers that will support the electrical cables probably won’t start for a year and a half, said Rodericks on Wednesday.

He said the towers will be set between the two railway tracks, “to the maximum possible,” and that no taking of private property for the project is expected. Some trees may be trimmed or removed.

According to the Caltrain, Atherton and some cities north of Atherton, and the San Jose leg, will be the first to get the work done.

The new, electric-powered trains are scheduled to be operational by 2020. They will, according to the railway, “allow Caltrain to operate quieter, cleaner, more frequent and/or faster train service to more riders. Increased capacity and improved service will help Caltrain meet increasing ridership demand and alleviate local and regional traffic congestion.”

The electrified corridor is expected to eventually be used by the state high-speed rail service, possibly as soon as 2019, according to the Caltrain website.



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John Orr John Orr edits and writes for Daily News feature pages, including arts and entertainment. He also reports on the Town of Atherton and some other cities. Previously, he was mysteries and thrillers books columnist for the Mercury News, and also wrote about movies and blues music.

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