

# High-speed rail work continues: Bridge replacement to begin in downtown Fresno

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Drivers through downtown Fresno are likely to encounter changes to their motoring routes through most of 2016, as demolition work is set to begin Jan. 4 on the Tuolumne Street bridge.

The one-way bridge, which carries eastbound traffic across the [Union Pacific Railroad](#) freight tracks in downtown Fresno, is being leveled to make way for California's high-speed train project. It will be replaced by a taller two-way bridge that will accommodate the clearances necessary for high-speed trains and the electrical lines to power them. The two-way bridge will also allow for the demolition of the nearby one-way-westbound Stanislaus Street bridge.

Traffic detours will begin Jan. 4 to direct drivers around the demolition and construction area, according to the [California High-Speed Rail Authority](#). The demolition work is expected to begin in mid-January and take two to three months, followed by construction of the new bridge. The demolition and construction are expected to take a total of 10 to 12 months.

During the work, Tuolumne Street will be closed between Broadway and F streets. G and H streets will also be subject to periodic closures while the work moves forward. Drivers heading east on Tuolumne Street will be rerouted to head south on F Street to Fresno Street. Stanislaus Street will be unaffected by the demolition work "and won't be touched until everything is finished with Tuolumne Street," said Toni Tinoco, a rail authority spokeswoman.

The Tuolumne and Stanislaus bridges both have two traffic lanes. The new Tuolumne bridge will have one eastbound and one westbound lane.

## Pace of work picks up in 2016

To the north, in Madera County, contractors are building a 1,600-foot viaduct that will carry bullet trains over the Fresno River, Highway 145 and Raymond Road. But the Tuolumne Street bridge project represents some of the first major work in downtown Fresno for the high-speed rail project, aside from continuing to demolish buildings to clear the way for the tracks. Rail authority CEO Jeff Morales said he expects the pace of work to pick up substantially in early 2016, after languishing for months.

The work in Madera and Fresno is part of the rail authority's [Construction Package 1](#), a \$1 billion contract awarded 2 1/2 years ago for the design and construction of a 29-mile segment from Avenue 17 at the northeast fringe of Madera to American Avenue at the south edge of Fresno.

"We're going to see (in January) six major construction sites underway in and around Fresno, another one a few weeks later, and we'll just keep going from there," Morales told The Bee's editorial board last month. In downtown Fresno, new street underpasses will be built at Fresno, Tulare and Ventura

## Bridge replacement

*Tuolumne Street will be closed between F and Broadway streets in downtown Fresno for replacement of a bridge over freight railroad tracks to provide enough clearance for future high-speed train tracks.*



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streets to carry street traffic beneath the high-speed train tracks, which will flow through downtown Fresno immediately to the west of the Union Pacific tracks.

\$1 billion cost of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's Construction Package 1, 29 miles in Madera and Fresno counties

Other segments of work that the rail authority expects to start in January are a new bridge for Avenue 12 to cross above both the new high-speed rail tracks and the existing BNSF Railway tracks east of Madera; and a viaduct for high-speed train tracks to cross over a canal near Herndon Avenue in Fresno. Within the first three months of 2016, two other major projects are slated to begin: a viaduct that will carry high-speed tracks over Highway 99 and Cedar Avenue at the south end of Fresno, and a trench for the tracks to run under Highway 180 north of downtown Fresno.

About 19 new grade separations are planned in Fresno and in Madera County to carry streets over or under the high-speed tracks. In Fresno, many of those will do away with a number of existing at-grade crossings of the UP tracks, eliminating the need for freight trains to sound their horns. Street crossings that don't get new over- or underpasses will be closed. In downtown Fresno, Divisadero, Kern and Mono streets are among the roads that will be closed.

### **Bookstore bites the dust**

As the new year begins, demolition crews are expected to start work tearing down the former Wildcat Enterprises adult bookstore at the northwest corner of Fresno and G streets. One westbound lane of Fresno Street will be closed between G and F streets starting after 9 a.m. Jan. 4 and continue for about a week.

The site is across the street from the [Cosmopolitan Tavern](#), which remains open until it can move to its new location under construction in the Selland Arena parking lot. Owner Gary Lanfranco hopes the bar and eatery can relocate in March.

Both buildings are in the path of extending the Fresno Street underpass beneath the nearby Union Pacific Railroad freight tracks to make room for the new high-speed rail tracks.

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