

Orinda to Walnut Creek weekend shutdown for Measure RR funded track work frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Why are you doing this work?

The track replacement work happening between the Orinda and Walnut Creek stations is critical to ensuring the safety and reliability of the BART system for its riders. BART is taking the initial steps in a systemwide rebuild supported by voter-approved Measure RR and is focusing its resources on the segments of greatest need first. In this case, crews will be replacing vital track components that have been in use since the start of service in 1972. There's a lot of work ahead. Highlights of the work to be done include the replacement of 5,000 linear feet of rail, the installation of nearly 10,000 feet of new train control cable, and the removal and replacement 2.8 million pounds of rock ballast.

Why is this work happening now?

There's never a good time for a shutdown. BART strives to avoid track shutdowns, but they are necessary to perform large-scale rail replacement and rebuilding work such as is happening near the Lafayette Station. As much work as possible will be performed during overnight hours so we can limit the number of weekends when we must shut down the tracks. By doing the shutdown over the three-day weekend it gives crews the extra time they need to get the work done as quickly as possible. It's a priority to finish this work before weather conditions become a concern. The Antioch-Millbrae line is the busiest in the BART system. Making sure we can provide a reliable and safe ride on this busy line is a priority.

Why are you doing a track shutdown during Labor Day Weekend?

Labor Day weekend is traditionally a low-ridership period for BART. Doing this work now allows BART to impact fewer people while gaining a huge increase in construction productivity.

Whenever BART does track replacement work it takes a combined 14 hours to decommission a section of track and later recertify that the replacement track is ready for service. This fixed amount of time is a key factor in planning for any track project. During a typical weekend shutdown that allows a window of approximately 36 hours for productive construction work. But during a three-day period that window is extended up to 60 hours. That represents a nearly 67% increase in time for productive construction.

Why do you need to close two lanes of eastbound Highway 24?

BART and Caltrans are partnering to limit impacts for drivers because of this critical system rebuilding work. BART is trying to get as much of the work as possible done during overnight hours to limit the need for track and daytime highway lane closures. It's necessary to close two lanes of eastbound 24 so workers can safely use a 265-ton crane to lift oversized and heavy track components into place. The use of a crane is common during track shutdowns and normally doesn't impact vehicle traffic. However, there is limited space where the current track replacement is taking place, which means the work area must extend into the highway. BART looked at all other possible alternatives to avoid shutting down lanes on 24, but none proved to be a safe and effective option to accomplish this vital work.

A crane can't be used for track replacement in a tunnel so why do you need a crane for this work?

The track components in a tunnel are far different than those in the current open-air project area. In our tunnels switches are much smaller and the rail is fastened directly to the concrete slab. For this project there is no slab. Rail is fastened to existing wood ties that must be removed in their entirety along with compromised ballast rock. These switches are also much larger in scale. The area of track being replaced for this project includes six switches which are nearly 200 feet in length. Some of the individual components being replaced weigh as much as 8,000 pounds with combined weights of more than 15,000 pounds. The size of those components limits options for how they can be safely replaced in limited time windows. Bottom line: Each project presents its own set of challenges unfortunately what works in the confined space of a tunnel would not be effective, efficient, or safe for this project.

What kind of delays should I expect on Highway 24 during lane closures?

Delays are expected to range up to 30 minutes during the daytime lane closures, which will only happen during track shutdown weekends. BART and Caltrans are working together to limit impacts from this necessary track work on the public. If delays reach 30 minutes Caltrans will notify BART and BART will reduce the number of lanes closed from two to one. On single-tracking Saturdays lane closures will only happen during overnight hours when traffic impacts are expected to be minimal.

What's the timing for the lane closures and where exactly will they be happening?

All lane closures for this project will happen on eastbound Highway 24 near the Lafayette Station and Oak Hill Road. Westbound lanes will not be impacted by this work. On track shutdown weekends the two left eastbound lanes of Highway 24 will be closed from 11 pm on Fridays to early Monday mornings. Both lanes will be reopened by 7 am on Mondays. The one exception is Labor Day weekend when lanes will be reopened by 7 am on Tuesday, 9/3.

On single-tracking Saturdays, there will be overnight shutdowns of the two far-left eastbound lanes. Those closures will be from 11 pm Friday nights to 7 am Saturday mornings and from 11 pm Saturday nights to 9 am Sunday mornings. There will not be daytime lane closures on Highway 24 during single-tracking events.

Will the riders see any benefits from this work?

Once the work is complete the noise level of trains will drop, and passengers will experience a smoother, safer, and more reliable ride. The Antioch-to-Millbrae line that extends through Contra Costa County into San Francisco is the busiest in the BART system. These track improvements will benefit tens of thousands of riders every day for decades to come. People who live near the Lafayette Station will also benefit from a quieter BART system.

Has BART done this sort of work before?

BART has successfully completed numerous track rebuilding projects. Two of the latest examples include major track renovations between the Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre and Walnut Creek stations as well as between the West Oakland and 12th Street/Oakland City Center stations. Both of those projects were completed without requiring additional track shutdown weekends. Those projects have also delivered on the promise of providing riders with a more reliable, quieter, and safer ride.

How is this work being funded?

Funding for this work is coming from Measure RR, which was approved by BART District voters in 2016. Measure RR provides \$3.5 billion in bonds to rebuild the BART system over the coming years. RR funds have also been used to rebuild other portions of trackway. The expenditure of RR funds is monitored by an independent Bond Oversight Committee to ensure projects are cost-effective, meet quality standards, and are completed in a timely manner.

Why do you need to shutdown BART service instead of just doing single tracking around the work?

Safety always comes first for BART. That's true for our riders as well as our work crews. This project involves the removal and replacement of lengthy sections of trackway making it impossible to run trains through the work area during much of the construction work. Also, BART worker-safety rules prevent train service from continuing during this sort of work. Track maintenance at BART typically happens in the overnight hours when there is no service but some of that work is too large to happen in such a short amount of time. That's why track shutdowns like this one are sometimes necessary.

What's a bus bridge and how will it work?

Since we're unable to run trains between Orinda and Walnut Creek on shutdown weekends, we will replace that service by offering free bus rides between those stations. The buses are provided by our transit partners County Connection and AC Transit. Riders at Orinda, Lafayette, and Walnut Creek stations will be directed by BART staff on to the appropriate bus. There will be extra BART staff at all three stations to help you. Buses will run directly between Walnut Creek and Orinda as well as between Orinda, Lafayette, and Walnut Creek. Riders who would typically board BART anywhere between the Walnut Creek and Antioch stations and want to avoid the bus bridge altogether should go to the Orinda Station and take BART to their destination.

Beyond the bus bridge, is BART doing anything else to reduce delays during the track shutdowns?

BART is bolstering its service between the Walnut Creek and Antioch stations on shutdown weekends. Normally on weekends riders must wait 20 minutes between trains. But during the shutdown we will boost service to 15-minute intervals between trains running from Antioch to Walnut Creek to move people along as quickly as possible to and from the bus bridge.

Will the track shutdown between Orinda and Walnut Creek impact BART service elsewhere in the system?

While we're advising riders who need to travel between the Orinda and Walnut Creek stations to expect delays of 40 minutes or more, shutdown weekends should not impact service on the rest of the BART system. You are encouraged to plan ahead by going to the BART Trip Planner at <https://www.bart.gov/planner>.