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The Valley Press

By: Allison Gatlin

PALMDALE - As plans for bringing next-generation transportation to Palmdale in the form of high-speed rail continue to evolve, the city is developing plans for the transportation center where they will converge.

The existing Palmdale Transportation Center is a starting point for future development that will include not only transportation services, but housing, recreational and commercial uses as well.

This "transit-oriented development" is part of the newest land use plan the city is developing, which would remodel a section of central Palmdale stretching between Rancho Vista Boulevard and Palmdale Boulevard and the Antelope Valley Freeway to 10th Street East.

"We believe we're going to be developing a brand new downtown," Michael Behen, strategic initiatives manager for Palmdale's Public Works Department, said.

At its heart will be a "mega-regional" transportation hub, serving the California High Speed Rail, the high-speed rail between Palmdale and Las Vegas, Metrolink, buses and other transportation modes, "all the other technologies we don't know about yet," Behen said.

Eventually, it is expected to offer connection to Palmdale Regional Airport, as well.

"This is really a regional transportation hub that will serve everybody," he said.

The goal of the transit-oriented development plan is to create an area where people may live, shop, recreate and even work within walking distance of mass transportation options.

"People want to live close by," Behen said, with services readily available in a comfortable, safe, environmentally-friendly neighborhood. "They want it all right there."

Some of the changes to the neighborhood will be necessary to accommodate the larger station required for the high-speed rail, which uses platforms that are 1,400 feet long. The high-speed rail station is expected at this point to be situated between Palmdale Boulevard and Avenue Q along Sixth Street East.

Planning for this section of the city includes the station area itself, funded in part by a grant from the California High Speed Rail Authority. Additionally, more than \$4.2 million in Measure M transportation funds have been dedicated for the project, Behen said.

The transit-oriented development plan will inform the station plan, as will another study of the area along Avenue Q, from Division Street west almost to 10th Street West, for future development.

"We just have a wonderful opportunity to do major infrastructure planning that will change people's lives," Behen said.

The city has developed plans for this area in the past, but they are being revamped to meet changing needs and evolving plans for the corresponding transportation modes.

"We've been very good at adjusting on the fly," Behen said.

The existing Transit Village apartments were built under an earlier land use plan that will be supplanted by the new one which will build upon the

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concept.

"We just want to enhance that," Behen said, transferring "all the good stuff" to the new plan.

Officials hope and believe this type of development centered around increased transportation options will help reduce the number of cars on the region's freeways by serving some of the 75,000 to 80,000 daily commuters in the Valley.

To share your opinion on this article or any other article, write a letter to the editor and email it to editor@avpress.com or mail it to Letters to Editor, PO Box 4050, Palmdale CA 93590-4050.

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