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Rail station: Have your say

By: Charles F. Bostwick



PALMDALE - As city officials continue their planning for the area around the city's proposed high-speed rail station - for whenever tracks are laid either from Las Vegas or from Bakersfield - they are inviting people to participate in an interactive public workshop.

The workshop from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Nov. 29 at the Chimbole Cultural Center, 38350 Sierra Highway, will serve as a follow-up to the first public meeting, which took place in April, and will provide an update on public outreach, transportation, housing, land-use, economic development and station development scenarios, city officials said.

"When complete, a plan will be developed that will serve as a visionary document that will guide the future development of the High-Speed Rail station area," Transportation/Special Projects Manager Mike Behen said in the city's announcement of the workshop.

The station area plan is intended to promote economic development and sustainability, provide transportation and housing choices and improve the quality of life, Behen said.

People can participate in an online high-speed rail survey on the city's homepage at www.cityofpalmdale.org. Details on the Palmdale High-Speed Rail Station Area Plan are at www.cityofpalmdale.org/Projects/HSRSAP.

The 12-question survey asks people if they expect to travel by California's high-speed rail system once it is completed; what sort of businesses, homes or other land uses should surround the proposed Palmdale station; and what sort of architectural style should be used on the station.

The 12-track station is proposed along Sixth Street East south of Avenue Q. The study area stretches between Rancho Vista Boulevard (Avenue P) at the north and Avenue R at the south, with the Antelope Valley Freeway to the west and 15th Street East on the eastern perimeter.

The study area includes the western end of the proposed XpressWest high-speed rail line connecting Palmdale and Las Vegas via Victorville.

The primary focus area is within approximately one-half mile of the proposed high-speed rail station location, or between about Division Street and 10th Street East, from south of Palmdale Boulevard to north of Avenue P-8.

The planning is being done under an agreement between city officials and the California High-Speed Rail Authority. The city will receive \$600,000 in grant money.

According to the request for proposal, the station will include platforms for California High-Speed Rail, buses and Metrolink, and eventually will be served by airline service to the Palmdale airport; by the High Desert Corridor, a planned freeway/expressway connecting the Antelope and Victor valleys, and by XpressWest, a privately operated rail line proposed to use the High Desert Corridor right-of-way.

High-speed rail officials say they plan to begin service in 2025 between the Silicon Valley and the Central Valley, where the rail line is under construction. While they shifted plans in February away from starting service in Los Angeles, they say they still are committed to connect San

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Francisco to Los Angeles and Anaheim by 2029, with a station in Palmdale.

For years, the high-speed rail system has been beset by criticism statewide over its cost and its usefulness, with legal challenges against it filed up and down its route from Bakersfield to the San Francisco Bay area.

But Palmdale officials consider it so important to the Valley's future they went to court in 2011 to try to stop a new route study that raised the possibility of trains running along Interstate 5 and over the Grapevine rather than stopping in Palmdale.

As planned now, the rail line through the Antelope Valley would run along Sierra Highway through Palmdale and Lancaster, then veer west north of Lancaster toward the Tehachapi Mountains.

South of Palmdale, officials are studying three routes through the mountains to Burbank. While much of the mountain route is proposed to be in tunnels, residents and community leaders in Acton and Agua Dulce fear a tunnel route would affect their rural lifestyle, either by disrupting well water supplies or by surfacing too near them. The tunnel routes have also drawn oppositions from residents of the San Fernando Valley communities where they are proposed to come to the surface before heading into Burbank.

For details on the Palmdale station, contact Behen at (661) 267-5337, mbehnen@cityofpalmdale.org or by mail at the Palmdale Department of Public Works, 38250 Sierra Highway, Palmdale, CA 93550.

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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