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## AV to get high-speed rail yard

By: Andrew Clark



**PALMDALE** - High-speed rail officials said Thursday a "maintenance of infrastructure" facility would be placed in the Antelope Valley as part of the rail's San Francisco to Anaheim route and add 100 to 150 jobs to the region's economy.

The facility, one of six of its type along the route, is expected to be near the intersection of Columbia Way (Avenue M) and Sierra Highway and include jobs for inspectors, heavy equipment

operators, mechanics and laborers, welders, track engineers, signal engineers, communications engineers, electricians, signal maintainers, track maintainers and wiremen among others. Overall, the high-speed rail system authority expects the system to generate 1,300 to 1,500 jobs in Southern California.

"It's an important facility," said Lisa Marie Alley, chief of communications for the high-speed rail authority.

According to the high-speed rail's business plan, the maintenance of infrastructure includes "the personnel, materials, tools and equipment required to maintain the tracks and other infrastructure."

The business plan outlined an expected maintenance schedule.

"It is assumed that most maintenance of infrastructure activities will occur during one tour at night and that daytime maintenance of infrastructure staffing will be aimed at maintenance that does not negatively impact train service and responding to unscheduled outages as they occur."

Lancaster City Manager Mark Bozigian said the city has been talking with rail officials since spring.

"They've conceptually looked at where they want to do it," he said. "Our staff has been working with them on potential locations, potential impacts between Lancaster and Palmdale.

Lancaster and Palmdale officials said the site could be a job boon.

"We're not against a site in Lancaster," Palmdale Mayor Jim Ledford said. "Anything that creates jobs we will support."

In a 2013 letter to California High-Speed Rail Authority Chairman Dan Richard, Ledford said the city would be able to house a "high-speed rail maintenance facility and rail yard."

"The city's determination is primarily based on available 'vacant' acreage/parcels and proximity to existing and future rail lines," he said. "A more detailed analysis will need to be undertaken by the CHSRA

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before a final determination can be made."

Michael Behen, Palmdale's transportation/special projects manager, said the city also could play host to a "light maintenance facility" that would be for the cleaning, servicing and washing of trains.

"This is all being considered in the environmental document," he said. "It could be a catalyst for jobs. We have the people here."

Alley said a "light maintenance facility" location is yet to be determined.

One of the complications of the potential site at Columbia Way and Sierra Highway is the proximity to Plant 42.

"If the proposed functionality of the maintenance facility jeopardized the operations at Plant 42 in any way, shape or form, we would not support it," Behen said.

But Alley said the building would be only a single story and be on the other side of the existing Union Pacific railroad. Alley said rail authority officials are scheduled to meet with Plant 42 representatives next week.

During an open house Wednesday evening, Michelle Boehm, the rail authority's Southern California regional director, said the authority was considering multiple maintenance facilities in the Antelope Valley including a "heavy infrastructure facility," but Alley said that building would take up 170 acres in the Central Valley.

Boehm said the refined routes have made revisions in areas where residents have shown concern in the past. Boehm said the train's sole outdoor portion of the "Refined SR-14" route in Acton is west of the Ward Road overpass on the freeway.

"All of our bridges and tunnels are based on the geography. At that area, there's basically a canyon. We're coming out of the hillside on one side, crossing over and going back into a tunnel on the other side," she said. "Our crossing would be to the west of that existing interchange, which is actually west of the high school. We've moved it away from the high school."

Rail officials said Wednesday the routes through south Palmdale are at grade and not tunnels due in part to the San Andreas Fault.

"We're really trying to get to that existing rail corridor so we can travel along the existing rail corridor where we plan to build our station. We're working really hard to thread that in and to avoid the impact to all the other homes, residences and buildings in that area," Boehm said of the area near Sierra Highway and Barrel Springs Road. "We think we've found the routes that have the least impact, but we're still working on that."

The "Refined E1" and "Refined E2" routes are primarily tunnels but surface at Aliso Canyon and Arrastre Canyon near Angeles Forest Highway and the Southern California Edison Vincent substation.

"There's a lot of geography there. There's a lot of washes, canyons, ridges," Boehm said. "While there are still some impacts and we are working on them, we are not going to be above the sight line grade very much in that area because of that natural geography. We really tried to go into an area that's already highly used by both the train coming into the Vincent area and all the electrical lines coming into the area."

In June, Los Angeles County supervisors voted unanimously to oppose the "Refined E2" route proposed to run through the Big Tujunga Wash.

The joint motion by supervisors Michael D. Antonovich and Sheila Kuehl called for sending a letter to the rail authority board and the county's elected state officials that the board opposes any segment that would cross the Big Tujunga Wash at or above grade, and told the rail authority that the remaining two alternatives pose threats to homes and wildlife areas.

"They had some concerns about the E2 alignment and where it emerges from a tunnel in the San Fernando Valley," Boehm said. "We understand their concerns and we're looking at ways we can address that."

A preferred route is expected to be selected early next year and the accompanying environmental documents are expected to be completed by the end of next year. Boehm said the rail authority is expected to have

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