

## Nuclear Waste Coming Soon to the Roads of the SCV?

Editor:

Former House Speaker Tip O'Neill said, "All politics are ultimately local." Several Aug. 9 headlines prove his wisdom is correct, at least as to Santa Clarita. In its Aug. 9 issue, *The Signal* presages the battle over development of Newhall Land's "Riverpark," which longtime residents of the Santa Clarita Valley call "The Panhandle." The 662-acre/1,152-home development would include the extension of Newhall Ranch Road from its terminus at Bouquet Canyon Road, and extend it for several miles eastward along the Santa Clara River, crossing the river by a bridge ending close to the Soledad Home Depot, hooking up with Golden Valley Road.

Newhall Ranch Road/Golden Valley Road will have at least three *wide* lanes for traffic in each direction. Boosters of the highway across the Panhandle call it the "Cross-Valley Connector" — an 8.5-mile stretch of road joining Interstate 5 to state Route 14. The city of Santa Clarita, with Newhall Land's encouragement, has been seeking federal funds to build it.

Several East Coast newspapers report that the U.S. Department of Energy is making an effort to "classify," or keep secret, the transportation modes (highway versus train) and routes for the movement of radioactive nuclear wastes to be permanently stored in Yucca Mountain, which is just 90 minutes north of downtown Las Vegas.

The types of nuclear waste to be stored in Yucca Mountain are at the highest level of radioactivity, including those in liquid form. Those wastes are the types creating the highest level of danger to the public if spilled during truck or train accidents. There is major controversy whether the casks to hold the waste in transport have been safely designed. The nuclear wastes going to Yucca Mountain include those from West Coast nuclear power plants and research facilities.

The reason for the DOE's desire for secrecy about the routes for movement of nuclear waste makes sense from a national security point of view. However, the DOE's efforts also appear to be

designed to quash regional protests and political pressure about *which* transportation routes will be used for transport of the nuclear waste.

Nevada politicians of every political stripe, as well as business people and environmentalists in Las Vegas, have unsuccessfully sought to stop the development of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste storage facility. As a result, their plans to stop or delay the mountain as a nuclear dump have shifted to making local communities and politicians *outside* of Nevada aware that the high-level nuclear wastes headed to Yucca Mountain will be trucked or train-hauled through those other communities.

At least for now, one can click the **Internet links from the Las Vegas** newspapers to maps showing the likely routes for hauling of that nuclear waste through Los Angeles County.

For now, it appears there is no way to move that nuclear waste on the train tracks running across Santa Clarita. The homeowners on Terri Drive, with tracks right behind their yards, appear to have dodged the bullet. No need to disclose that trains passing 200 feet from their backyard barbecues will be hot enough to cook the steaks, burgers and chefs without additional fuel.

Instead, (one possible) route for truck hauling of nuclear waste through Santa Clarita is down Interstate 5, through Castaic, past the Valencia Industrial Center, past Stevenson Ranch, through the Newhall Pass into the San Fernando Valley, onto the 210, 10 and 15 freeways and ultimately to Las Vegas. Can you imagine the furor as those in Los Angeles County become aware? Nuclear waste-hauling trucks passing through Pasadena and Claremont? Heaven forbid.

Instead, the majority political opinion and clout in Los Angeles County and its congressional delegation will find it more logical to route the trucks hauling nuclear waste from I-5 onto State Route 14, up to the Antelope Valley and on to Las Vegas.

That compromise would send the trucks around the high-level bridge in the Newhall Pass. You know the one, with its odd centrifugal forces that make you feel like your car is going to go flying into the air. DOE engineers will probably look for a less perilous way to route the nuclear waste-hauling trucks to state Route 14.

What better means to safely truck the nuclear waste away from the heart of Los Angeles than on Santa Clarita's Cross-Valley Connector? It is relatively flat and smooth, away from the heart of Stevenson Ranch and old Valencia. The connector's engineering gets a bit hairy as it passes Golden Valley High School, but what the heck, John Boston has already aptly named the school's teams the "Toxic Dogs."

Remember former Mayor Jill Klajic's comments on the Cross-Valley Connector? When you accept federal money for local road building, you lose local control over the uses of ~~those~~ roads.

So, my friends in Santa Clarita, in planning for the Panhandle, be careful what you wish for.

Alan Shaw  
Las Vegas, via e-mail