

Bullet train officials commit to sustainability goals

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, July 20, 2011

Federal and state officials signed an agreement Tuesday that sets sustainability goals for the state's high-speed rail project.

The memo of understanding commits the California High-Speed Rail Authority to working with agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development throughout the project's design, construction, operation and maintenance.

Rail authority CEO Roelof van Ark said in a news release that the agreement builds on California's economic and environmental leadership.

"High-speed rail presents a new and significant step forward down that path: a clean, safe, affordable and fast way to travel that takes the pressure of a growing population off our airports and freeways," he said.

Assemblywoman Cathleen Galgiani, D-Livingston, noted in the press release that high-speed rail gives Californians an "environmentally clean" way to travel.

"Each year, high-speed trains will use one-third the energy of air travel and one-fifth the energy of auto travel in addition to eliminating more than 12 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions."

The project proposes to link Anaheim and San Francisco with trains traveling up to 220 mph by 2020. Construction is scheduled to begin in the Central Valley late next year.

UC Davis Air Quality Study Examining San Joaquin Valley

Kcra.com, Tuesday, July 19, 2011

DAVIS, Calif. -- Researchers at UC Davis have long known air pollution from overseas affects air quality in the San Joaquin Valley, but now for the first time, they are studying how much polluted air is coming from overseas and how harmful the air really is.

"In Asia they have a huge number of coal-fired plants, huge dust emission from deserts there," said Tony Wexler, the Director of Air Quality Center at UC Davis.

Wexler said they have a site set up at Chews Ridge in Big Sur to take in samples of air that will be tested for its concentration, particle size, and how polluted it is.

Wexler said as China ramps up its manufacturing, it is having a direct effect on those who live in San Joaquin Valley, including Stockton, Bakersfield and Fresno.

Wexler added that the air is polluted in these regions because of its geographical location. Once the polluted air arrives, it sits in a bowl and doesn't move out of the area.

"As we do more studies on health, we find that we have to keep lowering air pollution that we breath," said Wexler.

Wexler said the study's findings will be critical for elderly citizens, young children, or anyone who has an existing health problem. For the rest of the healthy population, it's about trying to stay healthy, and the air quality makes a difference long term.

Wexler is hoping the study will help put international pressure for countries to lower their emissions.

The San Joaquin Air Quality Control District provided the funding for the study.

