

City will soon advertise for bids
Hanford rail spur project moves forward

Eli Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel Wed., Jan. 4, 2012

HANFORD - A rail spur project in the Kings Industrial Park - a long dormant proposal - is chugging into life this year thanks to more than \$700,000 in federal grant money, according to Hanford city officials.

In a few months, officials are hoping to jump-start a project that they say would help attract new industrial businesses and create more jobs. On Tuesday, the Hanford City Council approved the \$927,000 project to move forward with advertising for bids from contractors.

"This project has been in the pipeline for a long time. It was first proposed several years ago, and now it's coming to fruition," said Hanford Public Works Director Lou Camara.

The rail work would add a railroad siding from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad into three city-owned parcels just north of Energy Street east of 11th Avenue, said Camara. The half-mile-long rail spur, which spans from the BNSF line almost to 11th Avenue, will include a subspur for each of the three parcels, he said.

Once complete, the spur is expected to help prospective businesses at the industrial park by enabling them to ship goods by rail and reduce truck traffic on roads leading to their facilities - likely the key aspect that helped Hanford secure the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) dollars.

"The idea is to provide rail service for these lots to make them more attractive for development," Camara said.

While a majority of the project will be funded by the federal money, the city is augmenting the funding from its own general fund. Construction has yet to begin, but it's already showing an indication of success, Camara said.

"For two of the three lots, (city officials) are in talking stages with businesses, so we should hear more on that shortly," he said.

The project will be advertised for bids for about five weeks, and the formal bid award may take place in about two months, Camara said. If everything goes well, construction could begin as early as April.

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Thursday, Jan. 5, 2012:](#)

Why California needs high-speed rail

By Peter Calthorpe

In 1956, the Federal Highway Act steered the American Dream away from small towns, streetcar suburbs and central cities toward today's auto suburb. It fit the time, shaped our communities, generated economic growth and changed our identity.

Today, our country desperately needs new infrastructure development that will create jobs and economic growth while updating the American Dream and ensuring its environmental future. The answer is high-speed rail.

More than a train ride is at stake; high-speed rail could catalyze the next generation of growth - one more oriented to who we are, what we can afford and what we really need. High-speed rail, along with innovative land use, will breed the kind of economic development and communities California is missing most - urban revitalization along with more walkable, affordable communities.

California's 520-mile-long high-speed rail would connect north and south for half the dollars that otherwise would be needed for highway expansion and new airport facilities. More significantly, it would become a catalyst for urban renewal, enhance local transit systems and generate market-wise development opportunities.

Transit-oriented development built around high-speed rail and local transit would be denser. Detached single-family homes would drop from 62 percent of our state's housing to just over half, with the difference filled by townhomes, apartments, lofts and bungalows. Given that large-lot suburban homes now have declining value, this is a reasonable shift in housing type, ultimately making housing stock more affordable.

This shift also results in 67 percent less developed land and would save prime farmland in the Central Valley and key open space and habitat in the coastal regions of the state. The more compact future means smaller yards to irrigate and fewer parking lots to landscape, saving an average of 3.4 million acre-feet of water per year - enough to irrigate 5 million acres of farmland in our water-poor state.

In the transit-oriented development future, average vehicle miles traveled per household would be reduced 40 percent, the equivalent of taking 18.6 million cars off the road. There would be fewer roads and parking lots built, less runoff water to be cleaned and stored. New highway construction is reduced by 4,700 miles, saving the state about \$400 billion.

Less driving means less air pollution and less associated respiratory diseases. More walking means healthier bodies and less obesity, affecting health costs. California would consume 300 billion fewer gallons of fuel over the next 40 years. When these gas savings are combined with auto ownership, maintenance, insurance and reduced utility costs, California households would save close to \$11,000 in current dollars per year.

The California Legislature needs to authorize the \$6 billion in bonds to begin this project. When compared to expanding highways and airports at a cost of \$171 billion, high-speed rail at \$98 billion is clearly more cost effective.

Just as the '56 highway bill helped spawn the modern suburb, high-speed rail would energize a new generation of community building - one that fits our current environmental and economic needs. This is an investment we cannot afford not to make.

Peter Calthorpe is the author of "Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change."

Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, Jan. 5, 2012:

Serious air problems

I was happy to read The Bee's coverage on Dec. 30 about the Valley's air quality. The newspaper did a good job explaining the air quality problem and what is being done to reverse the problem.

Our air quality is a serious matter because it affects the health of many people. This is why we shouldn't burn wood on days when wood burning is restricted.

*Jordan Edginton, age 14
Fresno*