

Valley air district gets funds to offset pollution from high-speed rail construction

By Mark Grossi, staff writer

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The San Joaquin Valley will get up to \$35 million over the next 14 years to offset the pollution created by construction of the state's high-speed rail.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board agreed Thursday to accept the commitment from the California High Speed Rail Authority.

Air district leaders acknowledged high-speed rail is a controversial topic and that they were, in no way, endorsing the project. The district is not involved with the permit process, instead focusing only on air quality.

The money will be paid through a series of voluntary payments as each phase of construction takes place, starting with \$1.7 million for the Madera to Fresno construction.

The air district makes such voluntary arrangements so developers can pay for pollution reductions in the areas where the projects are built. Since 2005, the district has received more than \$14 million in the agreements.

The district uses the money to help buy clean-air technology, such as new irrigation pumps, tractors, diesel truck engines and school buses.

Through the agreements, Valley pollution has been reduced by an estimated 1,375 tons of oxides of nitrogen (NOx), 167 tons volatile organic compounds and 108 tons of particle pollution.

The state rail authority expects construction on the first stage, a 29-mile segment from the northeast edge of Madera to the south end of Fresno, to begin this summer.

A project manager for the segment said earlier this year that the first major construction would likely be a viaduct over the Fresno River, Highway 145 and Raymond Road on the eastern fringe of Madera.

\$4 million in grants available to fund renewable energy projects

By Eryn Baldrice-Guy, staff writer

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The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has a new round of funding available for projects focusing on renewable energy, waste solutions or mobile sources. Proposals for the Technology Advancement Program (TAP) will be accepted until 5 p.m. Aug. 15. They will be competitively scored based on objective criteria.

Questions about proposal requirements will be answered at a free workshop at 2 p.m. July 2 at the air district's Fresno office. In addition, the workshop will be aired by video teleconference to the Modesto and Bakersfield offices, as well as to Environmental Protection Agency offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The air district and the EPA are funding this fourth cycle of the TAP program. Emission reductions from the selected projects will help the Valley air basin meet its air quality goals.

The Request for Proposals form can be downloaded at <http://www.valleyair.org/TAP>.