

State fines Kettleman landfill \$46K

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Sat., May 21, 2011

The state Department of Toxic Substances Control Friday ordered Chemical Waste Management to pay \$46,000 in penalties for violations involving spills of toxic materials at its hazardous waste facility near Kettleman City. The order also requires the company to fully comply with spill reporting conditions in its permit.

Officials said the fines stem from joint inspections by the state agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last year. The violations were discovered between February 2010 and July 2010, they said.

Chem Waste violated its permit by failing to report the discovery of PCB releases to the state, despite the requirement of verbal notification within 24 hours and written notification within 10 days of such incidents, the Department of Toxic Substances Control said.

PCBs are a toxic mixture of chemicals, banned since the 1970s. They were once used in transformers and other electrical equipment. PCBs can be toxic to the liver and skin, and have been linked to cancer.

In October 2010, the state department ordered Chemical Waste Management to clean up the PCB contamination. The following month the EPA fined the facility \$300,000 for failing to properly manage the PCBs. The contamination was contained on site.

State officials said they have no evidence to suggest that the spills posed any danger to nearby communities.

Locals examine bullet train plans

By John Cox, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield California, Friday, May 20, 2011

Of the many questions asked at Thursday's high-speed rail workshop in Bakersfield, the one posed by southwest resident Debbie Raygoza-Wells had to be among the simplest.

Would the trains be much like the ones she had ridden in France?

Why, yes, a project staff member responded -- in fact, they will be much like Europe's bullet trains.

If only all the questions were that easy.

Local residents brought a host of concerns to the gathering at the Bakersfield Marriott at the Convention Center. They wanted to know things like how the project would affect their property and who would have to pay to keep it running.

At the same time, there was a considerable amount of support expressed by the dozens of people who filed in and out of the room to check out route maps and informational posters before filling out comment cards.

The roughly two-hour event, part of this week's four-city tour through the Central Valley, was the latest outreach effort by the California High-Speed Rail Authority, criticized recently for not doing enough to provide public updates on the \$43 billion project proposed to link Northern and Southern California with 220-mph trains by 2020. Construction is scheduled to kick off late next year in the Central Valley.

Bakersfield resident Robert Rodenboog, a retired cruise ship captain, was less than impressed with the answers he got. He wanted to know how many people were expected to ride the trains, and how much tickets are going to cost.

"Nobody knows," he said in frustration after speaking with representatives of the rail authority.

"All these billions of dollars should go toward the schools."

Retired mechanic Roy Shaffner also suggested that the project be scrapped. Looking at the proposed track alignments, he worried that bullet trains running about a quarter of a mile from his house in Shafter would generate too much noise.

Even if it did get built and he were to take a high-speed train to San Francisco, Shaffner complained that he couldn't easily get to the wine country.

"You got no wheels when you get there," he said.

Francesca Otero took a more measured stance. The Bakersfield housekeeper said some people were going to be against the project and others would be for it. She counted herself as a supporter, mainly because it would save her family travel time on trips to see relatives in the Bay Area.

"For the majority," she said, "I think it will" be helpful.

Retired brewery worker Jack Vesely was more relieved than anything. The project's proposed route through Bakersfield originally called for building a 30-foot-high viaduct over his home on Rosedale Highway. But as he learned Thursday, it would only claim his backyard barn -- and he was OK with that.

"At 72, I don't want to move completely," he said. "Don't make me move."

Raygoza-Wells, the woman who had asked about the similarity to French trains, also has properties -- two commercial and one residential -- that might be affected by the project. She said she didn't mind, so long as she is fairly compensated for the imposition.

"I don't think a few property owners should impede progress," she said.

It should be noted, however, that she has other motives: As a longtime runner, Raygoza-Wells expects the project to cut down on air pollution.

"I think if you can improve the air quality in the valley, it's a great asset," she said.

[Sacramento Bee commentary, Sun., May 22, 2011:](#)

Viewpoints: Don't give away carpool lane access – sell it

By Sharon Shewmake and Lovell Jarvis

While California struggles to close a \$15.4 billion budget gap, there is an easy \$68 million that is being wasted.

To encourage purchases of next-generation hybrid vehicles, California plans to practically give away up to 40,000 green Clean Air Access stickers that will allow plug-in hybrid vehicles access to HOV lanes, even when the car contains only one person. Another program provides similar white stickers to electric, natural gas and hydrogen-powered vehicles. Giving away stickers is a mistake. According to our research, California could sell the same 40,000 Clean Air Access stickers to drivers of any vehicle for at least \$1,700 each and raise \$68 million.

We say that California could raise \$68 million because a previous program could have raised up to \$270 million. From 2005 to 2007, California issued 85,000 yellow stickers to earlier models of hybrid vehicles. These stickers will expire in July. By comparing used hybrid cars with and without stickers, we found that drivers once valued the stickers at about \$3,200 per vehicle, or \$270 million in total. However, the pollution and technology adoption benefits achieved were much lower than \$270 million.

Our research shows that providing HOV access is less effective at encouraging purchase of hybrid cars than a direct subsidy equal to the market value of the sticker. If California sold the stickers to any vehicle and used those funds to directly subsidize hybrids, we could achieve more hybrids on the road and cleaner air.

California Senate Bill 535 creates a new set of three-year stickers for enhanced hybrid vehicles such as the 2013 Chevrolet Volt or the Toyota Plug-In Prius. Based on the prior program, many

California drivers would pay at least \$1,700 to drive in HOV lanes for three years. Thus, the 40,000 stickers could be sold for \$1,700 each, or \$68 million.

Instead of a largely ineffective policy that tied together two separate aims – improving use of HOV lanes and encouraging hybrid cars – California should sell access to HOV lanes to those who value them most. This could be through a sticker program where motorists pay the actual value of the sticker, or through High Occupancy/Toll lanes. California could then use the revenues to separately subsidize hybrid vehicles, invest in other types of pollution-reducing activities, and/or reduce the deficit. Not only would these programs raise revenue, they would also ensure that any motorist who has a high value of avoiding traffic, whether doctor, plumber or patient, has an alternative to sitting in traffic.

Sharon Shewmake and Lovell Jarvis are researchers in environmental economics at Vanderbilt University and the University of California, Davis, respectively.