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UPDATE: 'Bullet train' routes would dodge Santa Clarita

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March 15, 2016

The California High Speed Rail Authority has revised the routes it is considering for its planned Burbank-to-Palmdale line and is now looking at three possible routes, none of which passes through Santa Clarita, a spokeswoman for the agency said Tuesday.

Two of the three routes, dubbed "E1" and "E2," would tunnel through the mountains to Palmdale, according to proposed route maps provided by the rail authority Tuesday.

The third, called the "Refined State Route 14," would tunnel closer to Santa Clarita and emerge above ground northeast of Robinson Ranch Golf Club, according to the map.

The point at which the train would emerge from the tunnel would be the Vulcan Mine near Lang Station, said High Speed Rail Authority spokeswoman Adeline Yee.

The announcement Tuesday was welcome news for elected officials of Santa Clarita, who, along with some residents, opposed plans to run the bullet train through the community.

"The fact that they (California High Speed Rail Authority) have chosen to study different routes and have changed the routes is wonderful news, and we look forward to getting more information," Santa Clarita Councilwoman Marsha McLean said.

"That's great news for the people of Santa Clarita," Santa Clarita Councilman Tim Ben Boydston said. "None of the routes will be through the community of Santa Clarita. It was a long, hard fight."

The Refined State Route 14 would still send the proposed train up the Escondido Pass and affect the communities of Agua Dulce and Acton. Residents of Acton were particularly opposed to the train running through their community.

"Santa Clarita has been very concerned about the original routes and how they would negatively impact all the communities along that route," McLean said. "That is why more information is needed. Just protecting certain communities along certain portions of the route and not every community on that route is not OK."

California voters approved the high-speed rail program in 2008 in hopes it would connect Los Angeles Union Station and Anaheim to San Francisco.

The plans, however, have drawn ire from politicians and residents over the years.

Residents of Canyon Country had protested plans to run the bullet train through their community, saying it reduces their property values and makes their homes nearly impossible to sell.

One of the original proposed routes called for running the train in a tunnel virtually all the way through Santa Clarita, while another would have had the train come out of a tunnel in the Sand Canyon area.

That second option, residents and city officials say, would devastate homes, businesses, a church and schools in the area.

Santa Clarita Valley Assemblyman Scott Wilk, an opponent of the bullet train, introduced a bill in February to give voters in November another say to keep or terminate the bullet train.

The Authority plans to present the proposed routes to the its board of directors during a meeting scheduled for April 12.

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