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BART clarifies plans for East County extension

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Contra Costa Times

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ANTIOCH — Plans to extend BART into East Contra Costa County are rolling along, but some residents are frustrated with the type of service that is coming.

Those frustrations were expressed at a community forum in Antioch this week on BART's plans to start work shortly on an estimated \$462 million expansion from the Pittsburg/Bay Point station to planned stations off Railroad Avenue in Pittsburg and Hillcrest Avenue in Antioch.

Dubbed eBART, the extension will use self-propelled diesel battery rail cars that burn low-sulfur diesel fuel — a source of contention for those who believe East County deserves standard electric-powered BART service.

Many at the meeting, sponsored by the Antioch Democratic Club and Democratic Club of Contra Costa County, questioned what East County had to show for helping fund BART for four decades.

"I don't want any stinking diesel. I want the bond between the citizens of this county and BART to be fulfilled," Antioch resident Fred Hopkins said.

East County is not getting electric-powered service because of the cost, BART board member Joel Keller said.

Extending so-called "real BART" to Hillcrest would

cost \$1.173 billion, he told an audience of about 50 residents and regional government leaders during Thursday's forum at Black Diamond Middle School.

"I don't think we're selling East County down the road. We're trying to get us on the road," said county Supervisor Federal Glover, a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area's regional transit group.

"The reality is that's the money we have," said state Sen. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord, adding that electric BART service could only be extended to Somersville Road, which is "barely in Antioch."

Traditional BART costs roughly \$125 million a mile, Keller said.

Keller was asked what happened with the idea of BART running trains on the dormant Moccoco rail line. He said he preferred that option, but BART and Union Pacific couldn't agree on a price before the railroad's business plan changed and it decided to once again use the rail line for freight.

Antioch Democratic Club Vice President Sharon Mossman said BART officials "had their mind made up and were so stuck on wanting the Union Pacific line" to connect with Discovery Bay and Tracy, "they just couldn't go back."

The BART service to Hillcrest, with an anticipated ridership of 5,000 people per day, would be the equivalent of adding another lane on the highway, Keller said. The eBART project and widening of Highway 4 are projected to be complete by 2015.

Brentwood resident Kermit Sveen questioned why the San Jose area would be getting traditional BART, despite not paying taxes for the service. Santa Clara County put together a funding plan "at none of BART's expense," Keller responded.

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