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Metro Editor Nicole White: (909) 386-3830 | citydesk@sbsun.com

Wanted: New Metrolink s

Highgrove man sees need to ease likely rise in traffic

By Stephen Wall
Staff Writer

R.A. "Barney" Barnett thinks he has a solution to clear up some of the traffic mess on local freeways.

The 68-year-old is leading an effort to build a Metrolink station just south of Grand Terrace.

Barnett is pushing transportation officials in San Bernardino and Riverside counties to make the project a priority.

The biggest obstacle, he says, is finding someone to buy about 35 acres of vacant land to build the station.

More than 2,000 homes are slated to be built starting next spring in High-

grove, an unincorporated Riverside County area bordering Grand Terrace that Barnett has called home since 1947.

"All this development is going to bring a lot of traffic to Highgrove," said Barnett, who publishes the Highgrove Happenings monthly newspaper with his wife, Ardie. "If we don't do something, the whole area is going to be jammed."

But Riverside County transportation authorities question if there would be enough riders to warrant a station.

"We're doing a thorough analysis to

determine if it's feasible," said John Standiford, spokesman for the Riverside County Transportation Commission. "If only a few people are going to ride it, it's not worth the investment."

The commission on Jan. 10 is scheduled to hear a report on the feasibility of a station.

In addition, San Bernardino Associated Governments' Commuter Rail Committee is expected to discuss the project on Jan. 18.

Barnett said there are now 48 Metrolink trains a week that pass through Highgrove between Riverside

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Station

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Locate the proposed Metrolink stop on a map.

and San Bernardino on the Inland Empire-Orange County line.

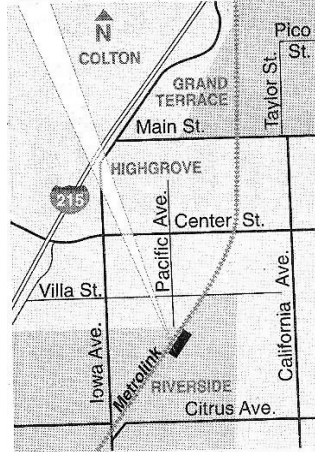
The proposed stop is seven miles from the Metrolink station in San Bernardino and 3.5 miles from the Riverside station, he said.

Standiford said he doesn't know if the land proposed by Barnett is for sale. The pie-shaped parcel, which is owned by a land trust, is bordered on

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Proposed Metrolink station

Highgrove resident R.A. "Barney" Barnett is leading an effort to build a Metrolink station south of Grand Terrace.



Staff graphic

METROLINK

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two sides by different sets of railroad tracks.

Barnett said the site is large enough for shops and restaurants to serve rail commuters getting on and off trains. Bus riders would have close access to the station from a route that goes through Highgrove between Riverside and Loma Linda, he said.

Barnett has received support from elected officials in Grand Terrace and Loma Linda. Both cities have passed resolutions in favor of the station.

"If it does anything to alleviate traffic on the freeways, I think that's a good thing," said Grand Terrace Mayor Maryetta Ferre.

San Bernardino County Supervisor Dennis Hansberger believes there is enough demand for a Metrolink station in the Highgrove area.

"It's a very worthwhile objective," Hansberger said. "Unfortunately, the people in Riverside County who have jurisdiction have not shown a lot of interest. But we're willing to try to get that discussion going."

Contact writer Stephen Wall at (909) 386-3916 or via e-mail at stephen.wall@sbsun.com.