

oil means more trains over the Tehachapis; safety a concern

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of two part:

r two new terminals in Bakersfield that would transfer oil brought in by rail car to California pi
rthand one south -- have cast a spotlight on two safety issues.

olves increased train traffic over the congested Tehachapis, one of California's most important e
orridors

r centers on the intrinsic safety of moving oil by rai.

unty's eas-west rail corridor is already nearing capacity as plans are being made for the new te
irst for oil would significantly increase freight traffic on the line

ely, construction may begin soon to bolster rail capacity over the Tehachapi Pass.

achapi Rail Improvement Project, a \$25 million proposal whose costs would be split by the s
ailway, would "double-track" two segments -- a total of 1.38 miles -- of an existing route link
Valey to points east.

average of about 35 trains running over the pass per day, the corridor is already considered
, according to the project's environmental review

e route carries a 50-trains-per-day rating, rail officials say that it is unfeasible to operate at that
it would require almost constant maintenance and leave no room for clearing up accidents. Ex
's existing freight volume would force more trucks onto Highway 58, worsening the areas air qu

posed two rail terminals near Bakersfield would offload 220,000 barrels per day of oil fro
and other "midcontinent" oil producers, then redirect most of that into pipelines leading to refi
Area and Los Angeles County.

the Tehachapi Pass rail corridor is experiencing congestion and delays, leading state officials to
pgrade as "critical."

ect's environmental review states the Tehachapi Pass has seen "greatly increased" volume over
because of a increasing amounts of goods moving from the Central Valley to the Midwest

ks and wait for westbound trains to pass.

ly, the plan called for five double-track segments and a price tag of \$100 million, or four times the budget

posal ran into trouble not only because state money was running tight, but because of noise, vibration impacts to the Cesar E. Chavez National Monument in Keene. CalTrans agreed to downsize the project largely out of concern for the monument

The Tehachapi Pass route is owned by Union Pacific Railroad, which shares the tracks with BNSF.

In order to qualify for government financial support, the project is required to begin by the end of this year

The proposed expansion comes at a time of increased scrutiny in the U.S. of the safety of shipping oil by rail

what U.S. rail officials say is a continuing decline in accidents, new safety measures targeting tank cars by train have been proposed in the aftermath of a tragic tank car derailment in early July in Canada.

A tank car carrying more than 70 oil-filled tank cars was left unattended the night of July 5. It ended up rolling down a hill and crashing early the next morning in the eastern Quebec town of Lac-Megantic. More than 100 people were killed

Safety measures suggested in late summer by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration include hardware adjustments such as better puncture resistance on tank cars carrying petroleum and other hazardous materials

Unapproved rules came in addition to emergency orders issued by the Federal Railroad Administration in August. Those rules focus on ensuring trains are not left unattended in certain circumstances, and require train operators to improve communication with dispatchers on, for example, how many hand brakes must be applied when rail cars are parked.

According to the Association of American Railroads, there were 10,906 railroad accidents in 2012, and a total of 697 fatalities nationwide. That's 15 percent fewer accidents and 18 percent fewer fatalities than five years earlier

On Thursday a tank car accident occurred in rural Alabama when several cars in a 90-car train derailed, spilling their crude oil cargo into wetlands and creating a huge fire. No one was hurt

Pipelines, a much more common and less expensive alternative to delivering oil by rail, also carry safer fuel. In 2012, a total of 569 pipeline accidents killed 12 people in the United States, according to the Department of Transportation. Compared with 2007, that represents a 7 percent decrease in accidents and a 20 percent decrease in fatalities.

Bakersfield than with monitoring the safety of oil shipments by train
mplishing one, said the agency's Executive Director Ahron Hakimi, will improve the other.
e on a roadway," he said, "increasing congestion on a rail line or a roadway does increase the li-
ents.'

sman for Kern County's Office of Emergency Services said it remains prepared for derailments.

al emergency responders are well-versed in how to deal with that kind of accident should it
an Sean Collins said