

Energy Department alters route for trucks carrying nuclear waste

By Susan Greene
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Thousands of truckloads carrying low-level nuclear waste to the Nevada Test Site will pass through Boulder City, Henderson and downtown Las Vegas rather than through North Las Vegas as previously planned, U.S. Department of Energy officials said Friday.

The route change came after North Las Vegas officials complained that the original path — across the intersection of Craig Road and the Union Pacific railroad tracks — would violate federal standards on transporting nuclear waste and jeopardize the

safety of residents living in the area.

Unless blocked by an environmental lawsuit filed by the state in June, the 300,000 cubic yards of radioactive soil will be carried from Ohio in 8,000 to 16,000 truckloads that must pass through local roadways on their way to the test site.

At a meeting with Department of Energy representatives Thursday, North Las Vegas city officials argued that the shipments should travel along federal highways rather than on city streets crossing exposed and bumpy railroad tracks.

Energy officials responded by

agreeing to alter the route through Salt Lake City and North Las Vegas to U.S. Highway 95. Instead, they said, trucks will travel west on Interstate 40, north over the Hoover Dam from Arizona to Nevada, through Boulder City and Henderson along Boulder Highway and the soon-to-open south leg of U.S. 95, through the busy interchange

near downtown Las Vegas to the Tonopah Highway.

"We have listened to North Las Vegas' complaints and to truck drivers, who say the southern route is actually preferred anyway because it avoids residential areas," said Joe Fiore, acting assistant manager for environmental restoration and waste management for the department's

Nevada operations office.

"I'm satisfied with their attitude and receptivity to our problem," said North Las Vegas Mayor James Seastrand, who helped negotiate with the Department of Energy. "But if Hoover Dam were in my city, I would wonder about that route, too."

While city officials in Boulder City, Henderson and Las Vegas

were unavailable for comment late Friday, a spokesman for the Nevada Department of Transportation foresaw no problems with the new route.

"We feel our roads are as safe as any built in the United States," Bobby Shelton said. "As long as they have the proper permits, we have no problem with this kind of cargo."