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Pipe rolls into railport

ELKO — The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has yet to approve the Ruby Pipeline project, but pipe has already arrived in northeastern Nevada.

There are several stacks of pipe at Northeastern Nevada Regional Railport in Osino, making the project one of the railport's first and biggest customers.

Another load of pipe is expected about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, at the start of a ribbon cutting ceremony at the railport. The public is invited to attend the short ceremony, which will include speeches by local officials.

Texas-based El Paso Corp. is partnering with Global Infrastructure Partners on the pipeline project.

According to a project newsletter, the companies believe the project is on schedule to be in service by March 2011. The companies are waiting on the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to issue a record of decision on the environmental impact statement and for FERC approval.

They expect construction could start by June of this year.

FERC spokeswoman Tamara Young-Allen said the next official commission meeting is March 18, but the board can issue an order approving a project any time.

"It's at their discretion," she said in a recent telephone interview.

Because of the project, Elko County showed huge gains in taxable sales related to utilities beginning in December 2009, the most recent data available.

About \$43 million in taxable sales related to the Ruby Pipeline project pushed December taxable sales up 37.5 percent higher than they were a year before. But because the sales were generated out of state, the funds won't go directly to Elko County governments. Instead, the money was distributed throughout the state based on population.

In addition to having pipe ready to go, a temporary mancamp for 600 workers has been approved in Vya in Washoe County. It is in the remote northwestern corner of the state.

El Paso spokesman Richard Wheatley said the pipeline, which goes from Wyoming to Oregon, will cross and interconnect with the Tuscarora and Paiute pipelines in Nevada to bring new gas supplies to customers along those lines.

"We are continuing to talk with potential Ruby customers/



end users in the state of Nevada. Nothing to announce yet, but stay tuned,” Wheatley said in a recent e-mail.

The pipeline would have the capacity of up to 1.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas a day, expandable to 2 billion cubic feet per day.

The BLM record of decision is needed because the 675-mile pipeline will go through public land, and Wheatley said El Paso hopes that is issued in mid-March.