

# Asheville: Crossroads of the Nuclear Heartland

New nuclear policies of the Bush administration are making new programs nuclear that in turn are resulting in a massive increase in the number of radioactive cargo shipments through our community over the next several years...and for years to come. Every single one of these programs is supported by our tax dollars. **We have a right to know** about these shipments and our health and financial risks associated with them. We can participate in the federal budget process and annual congressional approval of it, since this spending directly impacts our community. We have “standing” in these decisions since we are directly affected.

## New Nuclear Programs

- **Fixing Old Bombs:** Radioactive hydrogen (tritium) is an essential hydrogen bomb ingredient. Because it degrades in decades, tritium must be replaced periodically to maintain old bombs. Commercial nuclear reactors in Tennessee are now producing tritium for nuclear weapons (exactly the mix of military and civilian nuclear programs that our country has told countries NOT to do). The special rods with the tritium will be sent from Tennessee to Savannah River Site in South Carolina near Augusta, GA for processing; Asheville is right on the way. Once processed, the tritium would be shipped *back* through our community to be assembled into nuclear bombs at the Y-12 bomb assembly factory in Oak Ridge, TN. (See [www.stopthebombs.org](http://www.stopthebombs.org))
- **New Nuclear Bombs and Radioactive Leftover Bomb Scraps:** Savannah River Site has three new programs: 1) taking apart old nuclear bomb triggers made from plutonium and processing the plutonium to remove impurities; 2) production of plutonium fuel (MOX) for Duke's commercial reactors in North and South Carolina; 3) production of new bomb triggers (also called pits). The new pits will either replace existing triggers or fuel new bomb designs. Most all of the plutonium for these new missions will travel through our communities on I-40 to I-26 to I-20 to the Savannah River Site. After processing the MOX plutonium fuel will be shipped to four Duke reactors near Charlotte, while the new plutonium pits will be shipped to the Y-12 bomb assembly factory in Oak Ridge, TN, once again through our Mountain communities.
- **Nuclear Waste Shell Game:** Bush has approved Yucca Mountain in Nevada as a high-level nuclear waste dump. While the site must still be licensed by the NRC and is targeted by legal challenges from the State of Nevada, and others, we hear that leaders in Congress are seeking to start the shipments to Yucca in 2004 or 2005. The nation is tattooed with projected nuclear waste shipping routes, two of which cross Asheville (I-40 and Norfolk Southern rail line) and many other Western North Carolina communities.
- Nuclear fuel production – Erwin, TN, 40 miles north of Asheville is the site where uranium fuel to power the Poseidon and Trident nuclear submarine fleet is made. These submarines are the stealthy delivery system for part of the US nuclear weapons arsenal. Shipments of uranium to Erwin, and fabricated fuel out of Erwin are ongoing, and may use the new I-26 corridor. In

addition, Erwin is home to a number of nuclear decontamination contractors, and neighboring Jonesboro, TN has a depleted uranium shell factory.

### Nuclear Shipments Through Asheville and Western North Carolina

Route	Waste Type	Origin	Destination	Status	Notes
I-40 Eastbound & I-26 South	Plutonium powder and metal	Federal nuclear sites CO, TX, WA, ID, NM, CA	SRS* SC  To make plutonium MOX fuel for reactors, or new pits for bombs	Currently shipping  MOX fuel factory being challenged by GANE p	Powdered plutonium is one of the most dangerous materials to ship. Shipped in unmarked tractor trailers
I-40 Westbound & I-26 North	Plutonium pits	Proposed new bomb factory at SRS, SC	Y-12 in Oak Ridge, TN	Projected, if we don't stop the new bomb factory	Bush is not serious about disarmament: The US Space Command intends to put nuclear bombs in space.
I-40 Eastbound & I-26 South	Tritium rods	TN nuclear power reactor (Watts Bar), near Knoxville	SRS for processing to remove tritium from rods for use in new bombs and to upgrade old bombs	Approved, will start shipping in 2005	Violates every principle of nuclear non-proliferation
I-40 Eastbound and I-26 North and South	Enriched uranium and new uranium fuel	Erwin, TN	Nuclear Fuel factories in Erwin, TN;	ongoing	The fresh uranium would be shipped as uranium hexafluoride which becomes fluoric acid on contact with moisture  The new fuel shipped as rods - can "go critical" if submerged in water.
I-40 Westbound and Norfolk Southern Rail	High-level nuclear waste from	Commercial nuclear reactors to the east & south	Yucca Mountain in Nevada, on Western Shoshone Land	Approved, congress may vote this spring to ship in 2004 or 2005	Yucca Mt. will leak. For more info <a href="http://www.mapscience.org">www.mapscience.org</a> <a href="http://www.nirs.org">www.nirs.org</a> <a href="http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste">www.state.nv.us / nucwaste</a>

\* SRS = Savannah River Site, U.S. Department of Energy nuclear weapons production site in South Carolina, across the river from Augusta, Georgia. Largest employer in SC, operated by Westinghouse, now owned by British Nuclear Fuels.

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