

Machining Company Makes Tracks Beyond Defense

TRADE & TRANSPORT: Clean Cut looks to carve off piece of high-speed rail business. By [James Rufus Koren](#) Monday, February 13, 2012

Most of the precision-cut bits of metal and plastic made at Clean Cut Machining in Burbank end up inside of helicopters, jet fighters or other fighting machines built by big defense contractors such as Bethesda, Md.'s Lockheed Martin Corp.

But as the defense industry braces for slashing budget cuts from the Pentagon, shop manager Albert Fayroyan knows Clean Cut needs to look for other customers. So he's looking to tap another potentially rich source of public funds: high-speed rail.

"War is beginning to end, which is a very good thing. But generally, in defense manufacturing, once a war is over you get a small spike and then it dies off," said Fayroyan, whose company gets 80 percent of its revenue from defense contractors. "We have a lot of capacity to make parts for other industries."

Last week, Fayroyan and other small California manufacturers met in Sacramento with Fairfield, Conn.'s General Electric Co., Montreal firm Bombardier Inc. and other companies that might build locomotives and cars for California's high-speed rail system – if it gets built. The event, put on by the U.S. Department of Commerce and Transportation, aimed to introduce California manufacturers to the big rail car makers.

Terry Trumbull, vice president of El Monte manufacturer Electro-Mech Components, said L.A.-area manufacturers that serve the aerospace and defense industries should find plenty of business as states spend billions on rail projects.

His company, like Fayroyan's, has done work outside of aerospace and defense but wants to do more. The company makes light-up, push-button switches found in aircraft cockpits.

"We like the idea of broadening our customer base and not being so focused on the military and aerospace," Trumbull said. "We look at rail as having a lot of potential. We're thinking there should be some crossover."

That's assuming, of course, that California and other states move forward with high-speed rail projects. Gov. Jerry Brown has stood by the Los Angeles-to-San Francisco project despite a price tag that has ballooned to nearly \$100 billion.

But Fayroyan said he isn't worried. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood spoke at last week's forum, and Fayroyan said he takes the secretary at his word.

"He said, 'The money is there, we're ready, join us.' That gave us confidence," he said. "I don't think it's going to go up in smoke."