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Solar Trust reaffirms commitment to Blythe



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Editor

BLYTHE- After praising the Hell burger he had for lunch at the Rebel BBQ on Lovekin that afternoon, Solar Trust of America Chairman and CEO, Uwe Schmidt, told the Blythe City Council last Tuesday that he was "100 percent committed" to building the world's largest solar power plant in Blythe beginning in October or November of next year.

Solar Trust held a groundbreaking ceremony in June for the proposed 1,000-megawatt facility, before deciding last month to switch from building a parabolic trough system to a photovoltaic operation. The change in plans caused the project, which was scheduled to begin construction this month, to be delayed until the end of next year.

Schmidt said he had heard company's solar project of the once promised pulled out of Blythe after here, and emphasized that with Solar Trust.

"I want to say loud and not going to pull a told the City Council.

In an interview with the day, Schmidt said that it realities that caused the put the project on delay. He cost of solar panels better business to make the

"It's a buyer's market for PV will also have the distinction largest PV panel buyer in the world," he said. "As business people, it's always prudent to listen to your customer's needs. There are a lot of stakeholders and this will be a win-win for all of them. Ratepayers will have cheaper power, the impact on the environment will be less pervasive, and shareholders will have the right return. A successful facility that is in tune to market conditions means a successful company - and that means job creation."

Schmidt said that the construction of the plant would have a positive financial impact on businesses, both locally and across the country. On site in Blythe, he said the building of the plant should take between 350 to 400 construction workers. He said the jobs will be union and that through a partnership with Palo Verde College, which is providing training, locals would qualify for those union jobs. After the plant is built there will be approximately 40 jobs running the facility.

"What's important to note for the local community is that PV (photovoltaic) has the advantage of us hiring a lot more local labor than to have to draw on a labor force with specific skill sets," Schmidt said. "My personal company mandate is to focus on putting people to work who already live here who may not have



Solar Trust of America Chairman and CEO Uwe Schmidt made a presentation in front of the Blythe City Council at their meeting last Tuesday. Schmidt said that he is 100 percent committed to building the worlds largest solar plant in Blythe.

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clear that we are Walmart," Schmidt

Times earlier that was market shift in plans that said that with the dropping, it was switch.

panels and Blythe of being the

employment, rather than to farm in from a long way off. As you may remember, at the groundbreaking I spoke of us entering into a partnership with the community. Job creation is important - this is our home base and I think building a plant of this size is going to put this on the map. Blythe will be the Mecca of the large-scale utility solar production.

Talking to a local trucking firm owner at the Rebel BBQ, Schmidt said he told the man that he would need 30,000 truckloads to construct the plant, which would provide more benefits to local workers and businesses. Nationally, he said the solar field would use \$1 billion worth of steel, bringing employment to many workers across the country.

He said that while many parts will be built around the world, Solar Trust would assemble them here in Blythe, creating even more jobs.

"Blythe really is the cornerstone of this initiative," Schmidt said. "A lot of big business is coming to this area."

With the change in plans though, Solar Trust must start the permitting process all over again. They also will have to finance the project without a \$2.1 billion federal government loan guarantee.

Despite the setback, Schmidt said that most of initial studies would stand and that with photovoltaic having a smaller environmental footprint, he predicted few obstacles in the process.

He said that an advantage of switching to photovoltaic is that the construction will be faster and that they will be able to put power on the grid in smaller increments until they reach the 1,000-megawatt goal.

"That's attractive from a cash flow vantage point," Schmidt said. "It allows us to hit the ground running faster. We believe it was the correct decision for the stakeholders and that's what drove the decision. I'm committed to being green not only on paper but in reality. That means facing the realities of the market, listening to the needs of your customers and picking the right technology at the right time. That's what we're doing here."

Schmidt continued to emphasize his commitment to Blythe and the people who live here.

"We're here to stay and our home base will be in Blythe," he said. "We're committed to building the largest solar plant in the world and generating sustainable power. Our resources are finite and we need renewable energy, not just in Blythe but worldwide. We want to generate power for a long time."

Hopefully for the future of Blythe, the Rebel BBQ will be putting out good food for just as long.