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Greig Smith to lead six-country trip to study trash facilities

L.A. councilman and other city officials will examine how other countries convert waste to energy. The trip will be paid for with fees from Sunshine Canyon Landfill.

By David Zahniser, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

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Only days after Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said he would leave town in June for a trip to Israel, a city councilman from the San Fernando Valley announced Thursday that he would spend an entire month looking at trash conversion facilities around the globe.

Councilman Greig Smith said he and other city officials would travel to Canada, Japan, Israel, France, Germany and Spain as part of a fact-finding mission waged by the city's Bureau of Sanitation. They will also visit Bakersfield.

Each destination has at least one facility whose technology may be adopted by Los Angeles in the next two years. Smith, an enthusiastic supporter of "trash to energy," said his colleagues have already suggested three potential locations for such garbage conversion plants, including one near Los Angeles International Airport and another near Griffith Park.

"Los Angeles will be the leader in America in converting trash to energy," Smith told a breakfast crowd at the Los Angeles Current Affairs Forum.

Villaraigosa leaves for Israel on June 11, taking Councilmen Dennis Zine and Jack Weiss, among others. Smith departs the next day and will take aides from his office and aides to Councilmen Tony Cardenas and Bill Rosendahl.

Smith has focused heavily on efforts to divert trash from landfills, in large part because of his efforts to close Sunshine Canyon Landfill in Granada Hills. Smith cited Germany as a country that has a moratorium on new landfills and reuses nearly all of its trash.

The \$250,000 trash trip will be paid for with fees from Sunshine Canyon Landfill, said Enrique Zaldivar, who heads the Bureau of Sanitation. The agency has reviewed competing proposals for processing the city's garbage and hopes to open its first waste conversion plant by December 2010.

david.zahniser@latimes.com

Arnie Berghoff

**arnie berghoff & associates 801 S. Figueroa St. Suite 1050 Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.623.3736 x 101**