



February 2, 2016

San Luis Obispo County Planning Commissioners
976 Osos Street, Room 200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408-2040

RE: DRC2012-00095 - SANTA MARIA REFINERY RAIL SPUR EXTENSION

Honorable Planning Commissioners,

Margarita Proud is a non-profit community organization that represents a diverse group of San Luis Obispo County residents dedicated to the future livability, safety, and quality of life in and around Santa Margarita, California. We support and advocate for responsible planning decisions that result in the economic and aesthetic well being of all stakeholders within the community.

As companies increasingly rely on trains to transport oil to coastal markets, public safety within communities bisected by rail lines is a major concern. The highly explosive rolling pipeline being proposed would introduce well defined and far reaching off-site impacts to public safety.

Many residents within the community of Santa Margarita have expressed concerns due to the fact that the entire town, including the elementary school, all lie within the “blast zone”. While 30% of SLO County residents live within 1 mile of the rail corridor defined as the blast zone, 100% of all activity in Santa Margarita occurs less than 1/3 mile from the rail corridor (see map at bottom - Figure MP-01).

The hazards are compounded by the County’s inability, due to federal preemption, to require specific conditions of approval for Union Pacific along the rail lines. Consequently, the County’s approval of this proposal would allow an increase in risk to the populations within the County along the rail lines (as well as outside the County and throughout the state) without the legal ability to enforce any measures to effectively mitigate off-site impacts.

With the County's well established authority to regulate land use, a duty and responsibility exists to deny an application for a discretionary use permit when impacts and hazards outweigh benefit. This project proposal is the poster child for such an action as your team of experts (planning staff) has recommended after exhaustive review. Denial is the only reliable and reasonable pathway to protecting the safety and best interests of communities impacted all along the rail corridor.

For this reason, and because of the project's glaring inconsistencies with the Comprehensive General Plan, we concur with your Planning Staff in urging you to deny the application for Development Plan and Coastal Development Permit DRC2012-00095; and adopt the Findings included in Exhibit C.

Sincerely,



Roy Reeves, President

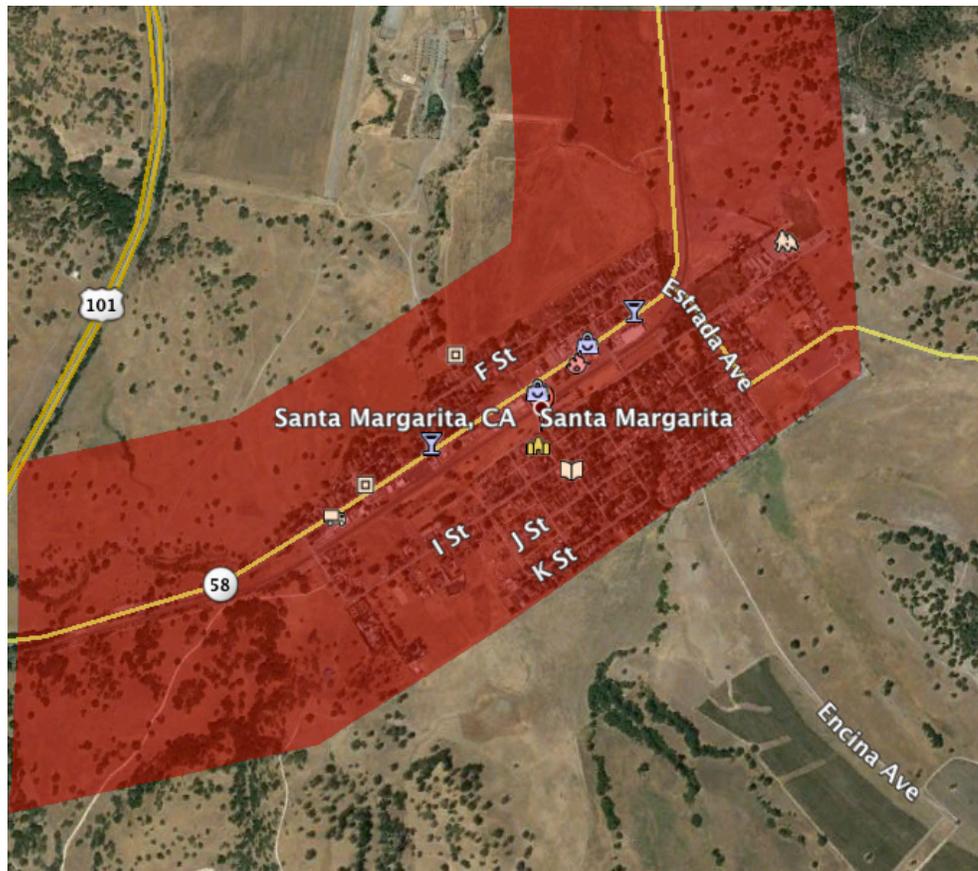


Figure MP-01 (Red area is a line 1600' (3/10 of a mile) to either side of the rail corridor)