



November 24, 2014

Murry Wilson
San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building
976 Osos St., Room 200
San Luis Obispo, 93408

Via email: p66-railspur-comments@co.slo.ca.us

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SB CAN

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Re: Comments on Rail Spur Revised EIR

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Santa Barbara County Action Network (SB CAN) works to promote social and economic justice, to preserve our environmental and agricultural resources, and to create sustainable communities. SB CAN advocates a holistic approach to community planning that integrates housing, open space, and transportation to meet the needs of all members of our community and future generations.

SBCAN-01

Given that our main focus is on Santa Barbara County, we leave it to others to comment on the myriad of issues related to the Santa Maria Refinery and immediate environs. The project obviously has major impacts on nearby housing, open space, and local roads.

The Revised EIR says there is risk from potential accidents on the main rail line that result in oil spills, fires and explosions near populated areas. There are maps at <http://explosive-crude-by-rail.org/> showing the US DOT Evacuation Zone for Oil Train Derailments and US DOT Potential Impact Zone in Case of Oil Train Fire. Within Santa Barbara County the latter zone includes virtually all of Carpinteria, Goleta, and Guadalupe, and most of Santa Barbara. The Final EIR should quantify the numbers of people that could be subject to evacuation in case of oil train derailment and the values of property that could be impacted in case of oil train fire.

SBCAN-02

In order to make reasonable estimates of these numbers of people and property values, educated guesses as to where the crude oil would likely come from need to be made. Texas and Alberta might be good guesses. It is not sufficient for the EIR to only consider possible impacts between the refinery and rail yards in Northern and Southern California. Millions of people and billions of dollars in property values are put at risk of oil spills or explosions by approval and construction of this project.

The REIR identifies other risks along the mainline: In the event of an oil spill, there could be significant and unavoidable impacts to agricultural crops and biological resources "due to direct oiling, fire, or surface and groundwater impacts." Cleanup activities could impact cultural resources.

SBCAN-03

Impacts on fire protection and emergency services along the mainline were found to be significant in the event of a fire or explosion. Remote volunteer fire departments are not equipped to deal with major oil spills. There could be

SBCAN-04

significant and unavoidable toxic air emissions for areas along the mainline that are close to populated areas. Greenhouse gas emissions in California could be significant and unavoidable, because they would exceed the air district's threshold.

SBCAN-04
cont

In all of these cases of potential mainline spills and emissions, the REIR states that, "the County may be preempted by Federal law from requiring mitigation for operations on the UPRR mainline tracks."

Yet, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors have the authority to deny the project on the basis of significant impacts that they cannot mitigate. For those bodies to be able to fairly consider whether to approve or deny the project it is imperative that the potential mainline impacts be quantified. Best attempts at quantification need to be made. A means of estimating potential population and property value impacts is given above. Potential cultural and biological impacts may be harder to quantify, but the REIR made no attempt at quantification.

SBCAN-05

As stated above, the REIR discusses greenhouse gas emissions in California. Maybe GHG emissions in California are all that need to be addressed in a California Environmental Quality Act document, but GHG emissions are a global issue and, therefore, regardless of CEQA requirements, the Final EIR, or the final staff reports to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors should address the GHG emissions that could be generated globally. Building this crude oil terminal will make it more profitable to extract high-carbon tar sands oil and other high-carbon oil that might otherwise stay in the ground. Refining of these high-carbon crude oils yields a by-product known as petroleum coke, or pet coke. Pet coke is more than 50% as carbon intensive as coal and is exported to other countries including China and Japan. The GHG emissions from the burning of pet coke in other regions and countries should be considered in the Final EIR, because GHG is a global issue. If CEQA does not require this, common sense should.

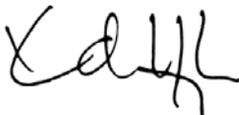
SBCAN-06

The REIR says that toxic air emissions at the refinery itself would be significant and unavoidable, because the cancer risk over a 30-year exposure period would be greater than the threshold established by the local air district. Even using the cleanest locomotives, which federal law may keep the County from requiring, the cancer risk would remain significant and unavoidable. The Final EIR should include information about toxic air emission thresholds established by the Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District and impacts on residents in northern Santa Barbara County.

SBCAN-07

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Ken Hough
Executive Director