SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Josh Olejczak, Chairperson

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June 5, 2013

From: **San Luis Obispo County Bicycle Advisory Committee**

To: **Mr. Murray Wilson, Department of Planning and Building**

Subject: **Concerns Regarding the Oster/Las Pilitas Resources Quarry DEIR**

Background:

Following an in-depth discussion on May 14, 2013 with members of the public, a representative for the Oster/Las Pilitas Quarry and members of the San Luis Obispo County Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), regarding concerns over the Quarry development on Highway 58 east of Santa Margarita, our committee voted unanimously to convey our serious concerns for the safety of bicyclists who ride Highway 58. This route is used by recreational cyclists and commuters every day as part of a major bike route in the north county. It provides access to Santa Margarita Lake, Pozo in the south, and the Creston backcountry to the east. Local cycling clubs ride through this area almost daily as do many individual riders seeking the backcountry beyond. On some days hundreds of riders use this route from Santa Margarita.

The Quarry project was introduced to the BAC at its meeting of September 14, 2010. At that time we discussed preliminary concerns. The DEIR showed no indications or an awareness of concerns expressed at that time to SLOCOG Staff. Furthermore, almost a year and a half ago (January 29, 2012), the 'Hwy 58 Aggregate Facility' was a topic of discussion with Supervisor Patterson. Yet, the current DRAFT EIR has failed to evaluate any impact on cyclists and pedestrians who utilize the public right of way referred to as State Highway 58. It simply defers to the weak Caltrans Policy regarding bicyclists. The informational nature of an EIR is intended to fully disclose **all** reasonably foreseeable impacts. We ask that it do so.

CONCERNS: The critical question regarding the quarry project's affect on bicyclists is, *"Will safety concerns along the Hwy 58 corridor be properly and effectively resolved to accommodate both the high volume of double hopper gravel trucks and the already steady use by bicyclists?"* The issues are summarized below:

1. The Traffic and Circulation Section of the Oster DEIR does not identify impacts to cyclists nor identify needed mitigation necessary to resolve safety issues. [In contrast, refer to the Santa Margarita Ranch Ag Cluster FEIR which did a solid impact evaluation and proposed some effective mitigation, including identifying Class II impacts to bicyclists.]

2. The Traffic and Circulation section's cursory evaluation of the general impacts from 273 daily truck trips does not mitigate for this heavy traffic load nor for the as many

as 800 trips/day that the Project Description says could occur for large projects. The EIR must provide a better evaluation.

3. The Quarry's proposed added traffic in double hopper gravel trucks, would exacerbate the marginal, unsafe travel-way conditions on Hwy 58 for cyclists and motorists as well (see examples below).

   The paved space to the right of the white-edge line on Hwy 58 is almost non-existent in both directions. This makes for unsafe riding conditions under normal circumstances, but becomes highly dangerous to cyclists with the presence of a single large truck in the same lane. Add the presence of oncoming traffic, another tandem hauler, and you have the definite possibility of a fatality. This road provides minimal clearance for trucks meeting head-on in the few straight sections. Add the undulations of this road and a bicyclist (or a group of 5 to 20) to the circulation picture (possibly occurring many times a day) and you have a formula for **disaster**. Most of the roadway has shoulder widths too narrow to provide room for bicyclists to move out of harm's way.

   Conditions on this rural Caltrans maintained route are minimal for bicyclists (and motorists) under current conditions and will become **unsafe** if heavy truck traffic, identified with the Quarry development, is permitted without improvements. These trucks will frequently have to move to the edge of the road and will continue to erode the edge of the pavement. There are many places where the roadway has broken away to the white line leaving absolutely no space for a bicyclist, thus requiring that they move into the travel lane; which is their legal right. The pavement conditions currently are deteriorating and will accelerate as the volume of heavy trucks increase on this rural road.

   If this road were re-built to Caltrans standards, with 6-8 feet wide shoulders/bike lanes, it would increase the margin of safety necessary, however, with tandem haulers passing bicyclists at the average rate of one every two minutes, there is still a high probability of an accident involving bicyclists. (In reality, the volume of morning truck traffic is likely to be much higher as loads are often required early in the day at jobsites.) At a minimum, this roadway should include Class II bike lanes comparable to that built by the County on Pozo Road from its intersection with Hwy 58 toward Santa Margarita Lake. Along portions of the Hwy 58 route the only safe solution is to build a separated (Class I) bike path to mitigate for limited sight distance and narrow roadway conditions where bike lanes cannot be safely incorporated within the existing highway alignment.

4. The applicant has said that Caltrans feels that Hwy 58 can handle the added traffic just fine; however the safety of all modes of traffic must be evaluated. This evaluation must include bicycles.

5. Deficiencies must be resolved, not just 'mitigated'!

   The applicant has indicated Caltrans would not allow a project to install bike lanes and instead has suggested that the Quarry ensure that a portion of their processed material be earmarked for base for bike lanes throughout the County. While this is

a nice notion and should also be pursued, it does not address the reality that adding such a high number of large trucks to an already unsafe travel way would exacerbate the risk to life and limb. Injuries and/or deaths due to these added risks are not just a numbers game. Are the applicant, Caltrans, and the county willing to accept that failure to provide a safe roadway could result in the injury to, or death of, a bicyclist? (Or pedestrian, or motorist as well?) The impact to bicyclists from the proposed quarry development, as currently planned, is unacceptable.

6. In addition to traffic safety issues, the BAC also recognizes that the air quality in the area will be degraded from dust (granite contains silicates) creating a possible health hazard (silicosis) if dust control standards are not strictly enforced. Will these dust controls, promised by the Oster/Pilitas Quarry, be strictly monitored and enforced?

The County Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) is deeply concerned about the safety of the users of Hwy 58 and asks that the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors take the necessary action to ensure that safety issues for bicyclists along Hwy 58 are addressed more thoroughly in the development of the FINAL EIR for the Oster/Pilitas Quarry. We urge your continued support of bicyclists in San Luis Obispo County as a valuable part of its economy as well as being valued members of the community.

Thank you,

JOSH OLEJCZAK
(BAC Chairperson)

John Joshua Olejczak

c: Frank Mecham, Board of Supervisors, District 1
Bruce Gibson, Board of Supervisors, District 2
Adam Hill, Board of Supervisors, District 3
Paul Teixeira, Board of Supervisors, District 4
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