



Department of Planning & Building Co. of SLO,

The following letter is a response to the Draft EIR of the proposed Las Pilatas Quarry Project. I do have strong opinions and will get them out of the way so I can present some overlooked and misguided information in the EIR about bicycling, traffic, and the effect on downtown businesses..

As far as my opinion goes I believe this to be a horrid proposal. To destroy the aesthetic, humane, rural, and overall livable character of the town of Santa Margarita for the benefit of a very limited few is crazy. Sure it can be said that the actual rock and gravel go to projects that help everyone, but that same material is already available locally with no new impacts to anyone.

As for the EIR.

**Bicycling:** At the town meeting when the EIR was presented to interested parties someone asked if they studied the impact on bicycling the representative speaking for the county said and I quote, "We found bicycles to be irrelevant." Well when the traffic study is done on a single day is the middle of the hottest month of course you will find bicyclers irrelevant, because there will be none to be found. Go out there any pleasant day in spring, fall even summer and winter and you will encounter bicyclers. I do assure you that Highway 58 is a well used route for many riders. As a matter of fact I use it daily to commute from Santa Margarita to Creston to and from my work. My commute has been greatly impacted by the current amount of traffic using the road to get to the solar projects. I now ride daily to Atascadero and up Rocky Canyon to Creston. I accepted this new route as temporary because of a three year build out of the solar plants and was looking forward to resuming my old route when they were complete. To allow the Las Pilatas Quarry would kill all future hopes of commuting by bike to Creston. That to me is not irrelevant. My solution to this issue deny the project or require the applicant to construct and maintain a class 1 bike path (think Bob Jones Trail) from Park Hill Rd. to the town of Santa Margarita.

**Traffic:** (1) To include the traffic from houses that don't even exist like the future Margarita Ranch developments into the study leads to false percentages. The overall number of trucks has less of a percent increase when the number of car trips is falsely inflated. Thus appearing to cause less of an impact. (2) Right now when buses in route to the solar plant turn east onto Highway 58 at El Camino many cars will go right at Encina and race though the residential district to beat the bus. This problem will be impounded and become a permanent issue when the trucks from the Las Pilatas Quarry are running. Nowhere in the EIR did I see this issue addressed. (3) Trucks heading south from Atascadero and turning left on to Highway 58 will also be a problem that must be accounted for. They must stop and wait for through traffic and people turning right from the opposite direction. While they wait cars following them will be using the bike lane to pass them on the right. Sit and watch and you will see this is happening right now even without the added truck traffic. This happens to be a blind curve and will put pedestrians and bikers at further risk. (4) The note that they may run up to 800 trucks a day during special permitted use concerns me. The rep at the meeting said it is for issues like disaster relief such as a major road wash out due to a flood or damage from an earthquake. As a long term resident, 25 years, of Santa Margarita I do know when Hanson's is pulling special permits and running all night, and it

was not because of major flood or earthquake damage. Two recent examples are the repaving of Highway 101 from Templeton to Santa Margarita and the airport extension in SLO. What is to stop the Las Pilitas owners from claiming special permit for similar reasons? The best mitigation for these traffic issues is to deny the permit altogether. Other solutions include requiring the projects owners to pay for a full time traffic officer, assigned solely to Santa Margarita, and employed by the county to patrol and enforce traffic laws. Have penalties in place that revoke specific individual truckers, who break traffic laws, from running through town. And have the quarry shut down for a certain numbers of days for each traffic violation. A final solution would be to require the owners to create an alternative route that by- passes 58 and the town altogether.

To say the truck traffic will have no impact on local business is incorrect. It will have an impact. Currently on a daily bases trucks pull up in the center turn lane in front of the downtown businesses and idle while the driver runs into the store to purchase lunch or whatnot. Sometimes preparing their sandwich takes 20 minutes or more. With 273 trucks running daily this practice will only increase to the point where residents will demand enforcement of current laws that forbid it. The end result will be that the trucks will pull in front of The Educated Gardener, Dunbar's, Budweiser, The Antique Barn and other local businesses, discouraging and preventing patrons from gaining easy access. The end result being a decline in sales for those businesses

Finely, it was noted in the EIR that there is only one bus stop in the town of Santa Margarita. This is not true there are four bus stops. Two, one for each direction, located at the corner of Encina and El Camino, and two up by Ancient Peaks. The two at Encina will be greatly impacted by an increase in truck traffic trough town. Especially when enforcement of no stopping in the trun lane begins. Trucks then will park at the bus stops so the drivers can run in and get their lunch. Causing buses to miss unseen passengers or even worse double park to load and unload people. Again the best solution is to deny the project.

In conclusion: The current EIR needs to be amended to consider all of the overlooked impacts of the quarry project. In the end it will be clear that these impacts far outweigh any benefits and that the project must not be allowed to go forward.

Thank you for your considerations,

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