

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298

August 9, 2010

Jeff Oliveira
San Luis Obispo County
976 Osos Street, Room 300
San Luis Obispo, CA 993408-2040

Re: Notice of Preparation, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)
Oster Living Trust (Las Pilitas Quarry) CUP & Reclamation Plan-DRC 2009-00025
(ED09-258)

Dear Mr. Oliveira:

As the state agency responsible for rail safety within California, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC or Commission) recommends that development projects proposed near rail corridors be planned with the safety of these corridors in mind. New developments and improvements to existing facilities may increase vehicular traffic volumes, not only on streets and at intersections, but also at at-grade highway-rail crossings. In addition, projects may increase pedestrian traffic at crossings, and elsewhere along rail corridor rights-of-way. Working with CPUC staff early in project planning will help project proponents, agency staff, and other reviewers to identify potential project impacts and appropriate mitigation measures, and thereby improve the safety of motorists, pedestrians, railroad personnel, and railroad passengers.

This project will have a significant impact to the Estrada Avenue/SR-58 at-grade railroad crossing (CPUC # 001E-231.80). The brief traffic analysis provided in the Transportation/Circulation section of the NOP/Initial Study mentions the signalization to the nearby intersection at El Camino Real and Estrada Avenue; however the study fails to mention the required preemption for the at-grade railroad crossing.

The DEIR Traffic Impact Study (T.I.S.) for the DEIR needs to address the following CPUC comments:

- 1.) The CPUC supports the signalization of El Camino Real/Estrada Avenue intersection. The current stop controlled configuration results in queuing onto the tracks from this intersection. The new traffic signals must be interconnected with the existing railroad automatic warning devices. Adding preemption to the new signalized intersection will clear any vehicles queued at the crossing prior to train arrival.
- 2.) The CPUC recommends installation of raised concrete medians on both approaches to the railroad crossing to reduce gate drive around incidents.
- 3.) The CPUC recommends extending the existing lane guidance striping currently on the east approach through the crossing to help delineate the traveled roadway through the crossing. The current striping stops just east of the crossing.

- 4.) The CPUC recommends adding bicycle lanes through the crossing to match the planned bicycle lane installation on El Camino Real as part of the Salinas River Area Plan and the Santa Margarita Design Plan. The crossing may be currently used by bicyclists traveling to the nearby elementary school. Adding bicycle lanes will aid bicyclists traveling over the bridge.

In addition to the potential impacts of the proposed project itself, the DEIR needs to consider cumulative rail safety-related impacts created by other projects.

In general, the major types of impacts to consider are collisions between trains and vehicles, and between trains and pedestrians. The proposed project has the potential to increase vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the vicinity.

Measures to reduce adverse impacts to rail safety need to be considered in the Traffic and Circulation section of the DEIR. General categories of such measures include:

- Installation of grade separations at crossings, i.e., physically separating roads and railroad track by constructing overpasses or underpasses
- Improvements to warning devices at existing highway-rail crossing
- Installation of additional warning signage
- Improvements to traffic signaling at intersections adjacent to crossings, e.g., traffic preemption
- Installation of median separation to prevent vehicles from driving around railroad crossing gates
- Prohibition of parking within 100 feet of crossings to improve the visibility of warning devices and approaching trains
- Installation of pedestrian-specific warning devices and channelization and sidewalks
- Construction of pull out lanes for buses and vehicles transporting hazardous materials
- Installation of vandal-resistant fencing or walls to limit the access of pedestrians onto the railroad right-of-way
- Elimination of driveways near crossings
- Increased enforcement of traffic laws at crossings
- Rail safety awareness programs to educate the public about the hazards of highway-rail grade crossings

Commission approval is required to modify an existing highway-rail crossing or to construct a new crossing. Completion and submittal of a General Order (GO) 88-B will be required for any proposed work to the crossing along with appropriate project environmental documents per CEQA.

Please provide the traffic impact study scope of services to ensure that the at-grade railroad crossing will be adequately analyzed with applicable mitigation measures to support the proposed DEIR.

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We recommend that a safety diagnostic be conducted with the CPUC, Railroad and County at this crossing to address the project related traffic impacts and applicable mitigation measures.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We look forward to working with the County on this project.

Should you have any questions on the traffic Impact Study/pre-emption study and to schedule the safety diagnostic, please contact Felix Ko, Utilities Engineer at (415) 703-3722 or email at FKO@cpuc.ca.gov.

If you have any other questions in this matter, please contact me at (415) 713-0092 or email at ms2@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

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