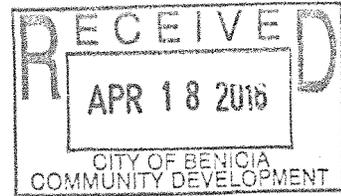


April 17, 2016



Benicia City Council  
Benicia City Hall  
250 East L Street,  
Benicia, CA 94510

Re: Opposition to Valero's Crude by Rail Project

Dear Mayor and City Council:

I urge you to vote no on Valero's CBR project and to not certify the flawed EIR.

Valero has asserted that its CBR project will utilize domestic energy, increase tax revenues and create more jobs. Each of these assertions is false.

Valero stated that it needs to bring in crude by rail to replace Alaskan North Slope crude, i.e., a domestic source of crude. What Valero has not acknowledged is that it plans to bring in by rail Canadian tar sands crude. Valero will be bringing in Canadian tar sands crude because its refinery is designed to process heavy crude and Canadian tar sands fits that description. Valero wants to switch to Canadian tar sands crude because it is being sold at a significant discount due to the lack of a pipeline infrastructure to bring it to market. Valero's goal is to thus increase its profit margin and not to develop domestic energy sources.

The promise of increased tax revenues is also not true. If past history is any guide, you can be certain that Valero would vigorously challenge any increase in the assessment of the value of its refinery for property tax purposes resulting from the construction of improvements to bring in the CBR. Moreover, the traffic delays and increased noise and air pollution resulting from the CBR project will most likely negatively impact property values in Benicia generally and accordingly reduce property tax revenues for the city in the long run.

The claim of more jobs coming about because of the CBR project is also a myth. The economic study Valero commissioned promises the project will result in hundreds of new jobs due to a multiplier effect. This study is unworthy of credence, as it is based on little more than wishful thinking. Additionally, the study failed to account for the negative impact the project will have on the quality of life in Benicia overall. Those negative impacts include traffic delays from running two fifty-car trains in and out of the city every day. Moreover, the refining of Canadian tar sands crude, with its heavy sulfur content, will cause noxious odors. Simply put, Valero's CBR project will make Benicia

a less desirable place to live, visit or work and will ultimately hurt the city's economy as well.

Besides these concerns, the CBR project will put at risk the lives of all those who live anywhere near the rail lines on which the highly explosive crude will be shipped. It will likely introduce additional carcinogens into the atmosphere of our city. Finally, by bringing in Canadian tar sands crude, it will cause increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Importing Canadian tar sands will allow development of the dirtiest source of crude oil on the planet and the one with the most adverse impact on global warming.

Dr. James Hanson, the former director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, and the preeminent climate scientist in the United States, stated that if Canada is able to develop the oil in its tar sands reserves, "it will game over for the climate." *New York Times*, May 9, 2012, Op-Ed; <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/10/opinion/game-over-for-the-climate.html>.

According to Dr. Hanson:

Canada's tar sands, deposits of sand saturated with bitumen, contain twice the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by global oil use in our entire history. If we were to fully exploit this new oil source, and continue to burn our conventional oil, gas and coal supplies, concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere eventually would reach levels higher than in the Pliocene era, more than 2.5 million years ago, when sea level was at least 50 feet higher than it is now. That level of heat-trapping gases would assure that the disintegration of the ice sheets would accelerate out of control. Sea levels would rise and destroy coastal cities. Global temperatures would become intolerable. Twenty to 50 percent of the planet's species would be driven to extinction. Civilization would be at risk.

To put additional context of how dire the climate change scenario is, consider these numbers derived from Bill McKibben's July 19, 2012 article in *Rolling Stone*, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math." <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719.html>. The consensus among climate scientists is that to avoid the worst catastrophes resulting from climate change, global temperature increases have to be kept below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). To have a reasonable hope of staying below that target, the world can only add 565 gigatons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere prior to midcentury. However, the proven current oil, gas and coal reserves in the portfolios of the fossil fuel companies total nearly 2,800 gigatons of carbon. In sum, if we are to stay below the 2 degree target, nearly 80% of the proven fossil fuels will have to remain in the ground.

Nor is climate change a problem that can be left to future generations to deal with. As you may know, 2015 was by far the warmest year on record in history, and 15 of the 16 warmest years have occurred in this century. Climate change is apparent in the number of natural disasters we are now experiencing, such as wildfires, floods and droughts. As recently as the 1970s there were just 660 such events. However, in the 2000s, there were 3,332 of them, a five-fold increase.

In sum, I ask the City Council to vote against a project that is based on false promises, will hurt the quality of life in Benicia and will contribute to global warming, the most dire environmental hazard that we face.

Sincerely,

Richard Slizeski  
363 West Seaview Drive  
Benicia