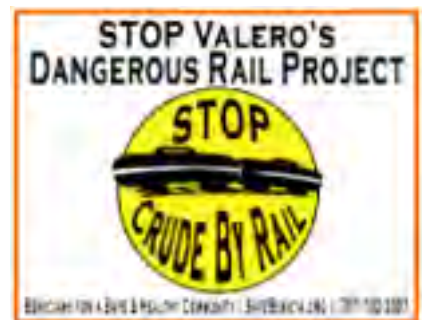


#StopOilTrains in Benicia



ORGANIZING TOOLKIT



TOOLKIT CONTENTS

I. FACT SHEET

II. ROUTE INFORMATION

III. ACTION ALERTS

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

V. DRAFT LTE & OP-ED

VI. OIL TRAIN BLAST ZONE

VII. SAMPLE RESOLUTION



Have questions or need support in organizing your community?
Email hosts@forestethics.org and we'll get back to you within 48 hours!

Stop Oil Trains in Benicia

The proposed Valero oil train offloading facility in Benicia would bring mile-and-a-half long oil trains carrying millions of gallons of explosive crude oil in unsafe tank cars through the Bay Area and beyond. Our rail system was designed to connect population centers, not move hazardous crude oil. Emergency responders are not prepared for these heavy, dangerous trains and current safety standards will not protect the public. The Benicia Planning Commission & City Council must reject the Valero Benicia oil trains proposal.

Crude oil trains threaten the safety of families along rail routes. Across the US and Canada oil train derailments, spills and fires are increasing as the oil industry moves more crude oil by rail. On July 6, 2013 an oil train derailed and exploded in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, leveling the downtown and killing 47 people. Anyone within a mile of a rail line is within the dangerous blast zone if there is a derailment, spill, and fire.

Oil trains create toxic air pollution. Volatile toxic chemicals leak out of tank cars into the air poisoning communities along rail routes. In its latest environmental review Valero admits that its proposed oil train facility will create "significant and unavoidable" levels of air pollution, including toxic sulfur dioxide and cancer-causing chemicals. The report cites increased health risks -- particularly for children and the elderly -- of cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and premature death.

Oil trains threaten California water supplies. The proposed rail route brings oil trains through the San Francisco Bay-Delta watershed. Each oil train carries more than three million gallons of explosive, toxic crude oil. A derailment near a river, stream, reservoir, or above a groundwater aquifer could contaminate drinking water for millions of Californians.

Valero wants to bring extreme oil into California. Valero wants to import volatile fracked crude from North Dakota and the most toxic crude oil on Earth: Canadian tar sands. Transporting and refining tar sands will create more toxic air and water pollution for families along the rail line and near the facilities.

Extreme oil means more carbon pollution: At every stage of the mining, transportation, and refining process, extreme crude like North Dakota Bakken and Canadian tar sands are more carbon and water intensive than other sources of oil. Bringing extreme oil into California will undermine the state's efforts to be a global leader addressing climate disruption.



Route Information

If approved, oil trains en route to the Valero offloading facility in Benicia would likely arrive via one or all three of the outlined routes as illustrated by the route map in the project's EIR, copied below. However, according to the EIR "on the basis of federal preemption, **neither the Refinery nor the City has authority to dictate or limit routes** selected by [Union Pacific Rail Road]." The document further outlines that "it is possible that Project-related crude oil could reach the Refinery through Roseville using routes from southern California" (RDEIR 1-5)



RDEIR Figure 1-3 - Uprail Routes

Action Alerts



Dear [NAME],

Right now is a critical moment in the fight to stop oil trains in California. Oil giant Valero wants to build a massive oil trains terminal at its Benicia refinery.

Act NOW to urge Benicia's decision makers to reject Valero's proposed oil train terminal.

Should Valero get its way, oil trains carrying explosive and toxic extreme crude will travel daily through Northern California - including right behind California's state capitol building - en route to the Benicia refinery. The project's environmental review even admits that impacts from "hazardous materials" will be "significant and unavoidable." This risk is unacceptable.

Aside from the public health and safety dangers of oil trains, we know that this project is a disaster for the climate. Building a new oil train terminal now locks Benicia into decades of using some of the most carbon-intensive oil on the planet: Canadian tar sands and fracked North Dakota Bakken crude. At a time when wildfires are raging and the drought continues to worsen, our communities need to invest in safe, healthy, clean energy projects that build climate resilience.

Submit your comments now: No oil trains in Benicia, no oil trains in California!

Thanks for all you do,

[SIGNED]

P.S. Five actions are even more powerful than one – after you take action, forward this email to your friends. You can also spread the word on social media with the handy buttons below.

Public Comments

Between now and October 30th, it is critical that as many residents, elected officials, first responders, and organizations send public comments urging the Benicia Planning Commission and City Council to reject the Valero oil train proposal. Public comments on the Revised Environmental Impact Report are due no later than 5:00pm on October 30th, 2015. Emails: Address them to "Ms. Amy Million, Benicia Community Development Department" at:

amillion@ci.benicia.ca.us

Letters Via U.S. Mail should be sent to:

Amy Million

250 East L Street, Benicia, CA 94510, or by Fax: (707) 747-1637.

You can use ForestEthics' action alert and forward it to your contacts as an easy way to submit comments on this project. That alert can be found at: <http://www.forestethics.org/action/submit-your-comment-no-oil-trains-benicia-no-oil-trains-california>



Sample Comments

These sample public comments can be adapted for communities along the rail route or for statewide action.

Dear Ms. Million,

I am writing to express deep concern over Valero's proposed oil train offloading facility in Benicia. According to the EIR, this project would create several "significant and unavoidable impacts" that could devastate my community.

Bringing oil trains into Benicia will create unacceptable increases in toxic air pollution for communities all along the rail route and near the refinery. The EIR identifies several significant and unavoidable air impacts from toxins and known carcinogens including increased pollution from NOx, sulfur dioxide, PM 2.5, and benzene.

According to the EIR, the cumulative risk of spills, explosions, and fires along the UPRR mainline "would be significant for all of the tank car designs," including the not-yet-built DOT-117 cars. Such a disaster could result in significant loss of life, long-term economic loss, and contamination of our precious wetlands and waterways. This level of risk is also unacceptable.

The EIR also assumes the "worst case" scenario is a spill of 8 tanker cars, or about 240,000 gallons. The train that incinerated Lac-Mégantic, Québec in July 2013 spilled over 1.6 million gallons of crude, or about 60 tanker cars. The EIR must assume a worst case scenario that reflects existing data on recent spills. Without an accurate worst case scenario analysis, this project can not be approved.

The revised EIR identifies "significant and unavoidable" climate impacts that conflict with California's existing climate law mandating the state move to an 80% reduction of greenhouse gas by 2050. At a time when wildfires are raging and the drought is more dire than ever, it is imperative we invest in safe, clean energy rather than extreme oil infrastructure.

In addition, analysis of census data demonstrates that a vast majority of people who will be impacted by this project live in EPA-designated environmental justice communities - primarily low-income and communities of color. Approving this project will only add to a legacy of environmental racism in communities living along the rail routes.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge the Planning Commission and City Council to not certify this EIR and reject Valero's proposed oil train terminal in Benicia.

Sincerely,
[SIGNED]

Draft Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

Submit a letter to the editor in response to an article, editorial or other news piece. It should be very short, 200-500 words.



Title: Stop Oil Trains in [PLACE]

The proposed Valero oil train offloading facility in Benicia would bring dangerous, toxic oil through [PLACE]. [Mention the previous news/opinion piece you are responding to and whether you agree or disagree.]

These mile-long trains carry millions of gallons of toxic, potentially explosive crude oil in unsafe tank cars. Over 5.5 Californians live within the blast zone, the mile-wide area next to a rail line that must be evacuated if one of these trains derails and catches fire. Here in [Place], [use www.blast-zone.org to describe schools, stadiums, water supply, other landmarks or high profile places within the blast zone.]

[Use 1-3 specific arguments to make your point: Strengthen your support or counter the argument from the original piece:]

- Crude oil trains threaten the safety of families along rail routes. Across the US and Canada oil train derailments, spills and fires are increasing as the oil industry moves more crude oil by rail. On July 6, 2013 an oil train derailed and exploded in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, leveling the downtown and killing 47 people. Anyone within a mile of a rail line is within the dangerous blast zone if there is a derailment, spill, and fire.
- Oil trains create toxic air pollution. Volatile toxic chemicals leak out of tank cars into the air poisoning communities along rail routes. In its latest environmental review Valero admits that its proposed oil train facility will create “significant and unavoidable” levels of air pollution, including toxic sulfur dioxide and cancer-causing chemicals. The report cites increased health risks -- particularly for children and the elderly -- of cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and premature death.
- Oil trains threaten California water supplies. The proposed rail route brings oil trains through the San Francisco Bay-Delta watershed. Each oil train carries more than three million gallons of explosive, toxic crude oil. A derailment near a river, stream, reservoir, or above a groundwater aquifer could contaminate drinking water for millions of Californians.
- Valero wants to bring extreme oil into California. Valero wants to import volatile fracked crude from North Dakota and the most toxic crude oil on Earth: Canadian tar sands. Transporting and refining tar sands will create more toxic air and water pollution for families along the rail line and near the facilities.
- Extreme oil means more carbon pollution: At every stage of the mining, transportation, and refining process, extreme crude like North Dakota Bakken and Canadian tar sands are more carbon and water intensive than other sources of oil. Bringing extreme oil into California will undermine the state’s efforts to be a global leader addressing climate disruption.

Our rail system was designed to bring people and products between our cities and towns. That’s why rail lines run through our towns and not around them. Our railroads were never designed to move hazardous crude oil, and they cannot do it safely. Emergency responders are not prepared for these heavy, dangerous trains and current safety standards will not protect the public. The Benicia Planning Commission & City Council must reject the Valero oil train proposal.

Draft Op-Ed

An Op-Ed can be submitted to a paper or news site anytime. It can be 600-1000 words.

Title: Stop Oil Trains in [PLACE]

The proposed Valero oil train offloading facility in Benicia would bring toxic, dangerous oil trains every day through [PLACE]. These mile-long trains carry millions of gallons of explosive crude oil in unsafe tank cars. Nationwide, 25 million Americans live within the blast zone, the mile-wide area next to a rail line that must be evacuated if one of these trains derails and catches fire. Here in [Place], [use www.blast-zone.org to describe schools, stadiums, water supply, other landmarks or high profile places within the blast zone.]

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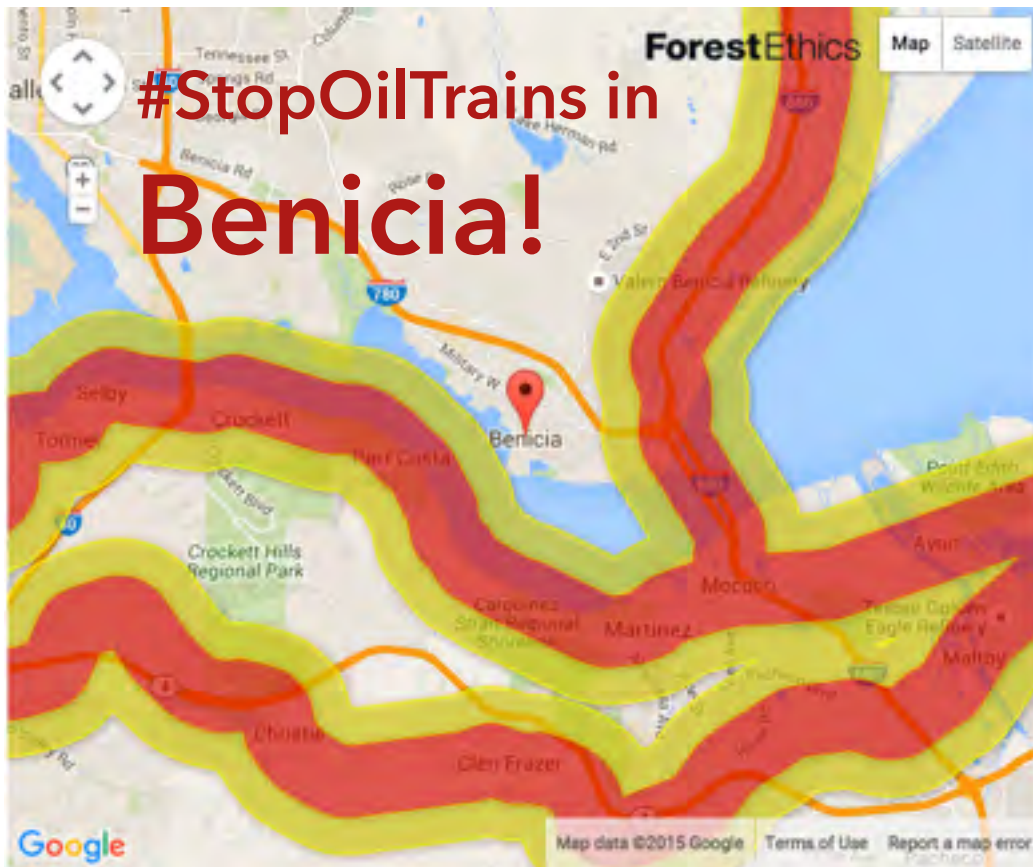
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Oil Train **Blast Zone**

ForestEthics developed the Blast Zone tool to allow users to understand exactly what communities are at risk for an oil train disaster.


Visit www.blast-zone.org to view the entire rail route impacted by the proposed Valero project, as well as routes throughout the US impacted by oil trains. Below are tips on how to create a **screenshot** from the blast zone site as an advocacy tool for your community.



How to create a Blast Zone Screenshot:

- I. Download a program that easily lets you take and edit screenshots. For example, Awesome Screenshot is a program that lives in your browser and lets you take screenshots with one easy click and then add things like text, arrows, and circles in different colors (see above). Evernote also allows users to take screenshots and save them as JPGs.
- II. Visit www.blast-zone.org and take your screenshot
- III. Save the screenshot to your favorite computer location
- IV. Post the picture on Facebook or Twitter and feel free to include your organization's logo, #StopOilTrains, and www.blast-zone.org

IN ONLY SIX YEARS,
OIL-BY-RAIL HAS
INCREASED 4,111%

 = 9,500 Rail Cars

2008



2013



It's time to put an END
to the oil industry's

PIPELINE

ON

WHEELS

This is the price of an
OIL TRAIN DISASTER



Sample Resolution

WHEREAS, a Valero Benicia Crude by Rail project is pending before the Benicia Planning Commission and City Council; and

WHEREAS, the project would enable 2 50-car trains (100 tank cars) per day, each unit train stretching 1.4-miles in length and carrying 2.5 million tons of oil, to transport crude oil through **[PLACE]**, traversing **[IMPACTED REGION ALONG ROUTE]**; and

WHEREAS hauling crude into California involves traversing some of the most challenging mountain passes in the nation, areas laced with earthquake faults and numerous unsafe old steel and timber bridges over major waterways, greatly increasing the probability of serious accidents; and

WHEREAS, the environmental documents for the project indicate that there would be unmitigated significant hazard impacts associated with the transport of crude oil by rail, including from a possible derailment of trains carrying crude oil; and

WHEREAS, this project has significant and unavoidable impacts on air quality, biological resources, hazardous materials, public services, and water resources; and

WHEREAS crude oil, like that coming from the Bakken shale reservoir, is known to be volatile, highly flammable, and contain elevated concentrations of benzene, a potent carcinogen; and

WHEREAS tar sands crude or bitumen is known to be an extremely viscous form of petroleum that will not flow unless heated or diluted with other lighter hydrocarbons that include toxic substances, and is known to be extremely difficult to clean up when spills occur especially in aquatic ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, homes, schools, parks and businesses are located in the corridor through which trains would travel; and

WHEREAS, in the event of an incident involving an oil unit train from this project, it could be necessary to close multiple rail crossings and potentially require evacuation of homes, businesses and offices and/or result in serious injuries, deaths, and environmental devastation, overwhelming police and fire emergency response capabilities; and

WHEREAS the last few years have seen a dramatic rise in transport of crude by rail, accompanied by a similar rise in spectacular accidents, nearly 100 in 2013; more crude oil was spilled in U.S. rail accidents in 2013 than in the preceding four decades, more than 1.15 million gallons in 2013; and

WHEREAS, there is ample reason to believe that an increase in oil train traffic from this project poses an unacceptable risk to **[PLACE]**;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that by adoption of this resolution, the **[POLITICAL ENTITY]** hereby directs **[WHOM]** to write a letter URGING the San Luis Obispo Planning Commission to DENY APPROVAL of the Valero Crude by Rail expansion project, inasmuch as it is far too dangerous to public safety and presents far too many environmental risks.

Sample **Opposition Letter**

Dear Benicia Planning Commissioners and Members of the City Council:

The subject project EIR concludes that the project would cause a significant and unavoidable rail accident hazard risk. The Council action that would avoid this significant public safety risk is denial of the project.

The EIR identifies that trains accessing the project from the Colton rail yard would traverse **[PLACE]**, traveling through the heart of many heavily populated areas, crossing many creeks and rivers, and crossing or running along many critical roads and highways. A rail accident involving oil spills, fire, or explosion could have disastrous life safety, health, environmental, and economic consequences in **[PLACE]**. On **[DATE]**, the **[POLITICAL ENTITY]** voted to respectfully request that, in order to protect public safety and the environment, your commission vote to deny the project.

Cordially,

[SIGNED]