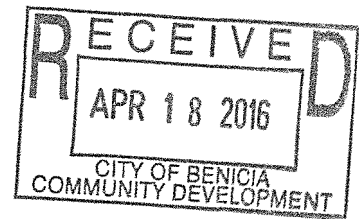


Please add this San Francisco Chronicle Editorial to the Public Record

Jan Cox Golovich <janlcg@gmail.com>

Sat 4/16/2016 10:13 AM

To: Amy Million <AMillion@ci.benicia.ca.us>;



Stopping oil trains is right thing for Benicia and planet

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San Francisco Chronicle Editorial Stop the Trains 16 April 2016



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<http://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/article/Stopping-oil-trains-is-right-thing-for-Benicia-7252031.php>

Stopping the trains is the right thing to do for Benicia -- and the Planet

California's efforts to lead on global climate change will come down to a local decision next week. Will the Benicia City Council allow 100-car oil tanker trains a day to roll into the Valero Refinery? The council should vote no to keep the state — and the world — on track toward reducing climate-warming fossil fuels.

Like the battle in Oakland to keep a port developer from shipping trainloads of Utah coal to China, the Benicia battle is emotional, divisive and very, very local. Since discussions between the city and refinery began in 2013, townspeople have packed the City Council chambers for each crucial vote in the permitting process.

Valero's refinery, its stacks and cooling towers visible for miles, spreads across the northern edge of Benicia, a riverside town of 28,000 in Solano County. Valero is the source of jobs and a significant portion of the city's tax base. Yet, drive through the streets and you will see "Stop Crude by Rail" signs everywhere.

This local decision counts because Benicia is a link in the global oil market. Oil trains would transport crude from the Bakken oil shale in North Dakota, as there are no pipelines from that region to deliver petroleum to refineries. Currently, Valero brings in most of the crude it refines via oceangoing tanker, which will continue regardless of the vote on the permit to retrofit the refinery for rail delivery.

Because of the small city's important role in addressing global climate change, California Attorney General Kamala Harris has interceded twice in the permitting process. In 2014, at the urging of mayors of

California cities along the rail lines, she required the city to redraft the environmental impact report to address rail safety and environmental impacts.

Last week, in a letter to the city, she disagreed with Valero's view (also held by city consultants and staff) that Benicia was legally prohibited from denying the permit because federal rail transport law preempts local authority. Not so, the AG said: Federal law applies to railroads, not refineries. "Under federal law, the City retains its authority to take discretionary action to approve or deny Valero's Project."

The City Council must use its legal authority to do the right thing for Benicia — and the planet. Deny the permit.

Thank you,
Jan Cox Golovich