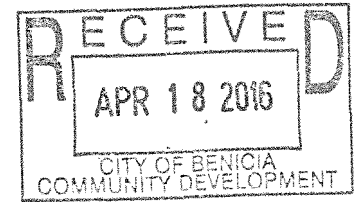


Adopt Benicia Planning Commission's Recommendation to Deny Valero Project



Karen Jacques <threegables1819@gmail.com> on behalf of
Karen Jacques <threegables@macnexus.org>

Sun 4/17/2016 6:21 PM

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

Amy Million

Principal Planner

Benicia Community Development Department

250 East L Street

Benicia Ca, 94510

Re: Adopt Planning Commission Recommendation and Deny Valero Expansion/Oil Trains

Dear Ms. Million

I am one of the many people who came by bus from Sacramento to express our support for the Benicia Planning Commission's unanimous recommendation to deny the Valero expansion. If approved, that expansion will result in two fifty car oil trains coming through a large portion our city every day. I was not able to speak at the hearing due to time limitations so I am sending you my written comments to forward to the City Council.

My husband and I both live and work in what will become the 'blast zone' if the Valero expansion is approved, as do thousands of other people along the train route, including residents of Benicia. In the city of Sacramento alone, thirteen thousand children attend schools located within the 'blast zone'. The oil trains that Valero wants to send through our city and through so many other cities and towns, not to mention across rivers that supply drinking water, will carry bakken shale oil and tar sands, the most volatile, dirty and dangerous of all fossil fuels. Trains will travel in DOT 111 cars which the Federal Department of Transportation has admitted are unsafe, but declined to regulate adequately. They will travel on tracks that are old, many of which have not been inspected for years. The record of spills, derailments and explosions that have already occurred, including Lac Megantic in Quebec where forty seven people were incinerated and the town center was destroyed, have been horrifying. In Sacramento, the trains will run through the middle of our central city where cars currently back up for blocks waiting for trains to pass. Depending on the time of day and amount of traffic there will literally be no way for anyone in the 'blast zone' to escape.

Approval of the Valero project has been framed as a land use issue. But in reality, it is a profound moral and ethical issue about whether anyone, including any City Council, has the right to approve (and remember that State Attorney General Kamila Harris has said that the decision belongs to the Benicia City Council and is not pre-empted by federal law) a project that has the potential to kill and injure so many people, destroy so much property, poison waterways and cause massive and likely irreparable damage to the environment. Even if a given location is lucky enough not to experience an accident, these trains and their deadly cargo will emit toxins that will significantly impact air quality and the health of humans and other species on a daily basis. If members of the City Council approve this project and there is an accident, they will be directly responsible for the for the death and destruction that results from that approval. They will also be responsible for increasing air pollution and the negative health effects of such pollution. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to oppose Valero because its members did not feel that they had the ethical or moral right to put others at that kind of risk. Given what is at stake, it is imperative that the council follow their example.

In addition to all of the above, the City Council also needs to make its decision in light of climate change. Scientists have told us that we are running out of time and that we must keep at least eight percent of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground if we are to have any chance of averting the worst effects of climate change. California's drought is a daily reminder of the damage climate change is doing and will do. The last thing our planet needs is more fossil fuel infrastructure to allow the extraction of still more fossil fuels and that is exactly what the proposed Valero expansion will create. In making a decision, I ask that council members remember that they have a moral and ethical responsibility not just to all of us who are alive today (including non-human species) and are the potential victims of a train accident, but especially to young people and future generations.

Thank-you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Karen Jacques,

Blast Zone Resident and Potential Victim