



Meeting Date: 1 / 27 / 2015

ACTION	TYPE OF ITEM
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/> Info/Consent
<input type="checkbox"/> Ord. No(s). _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Report
<input type="checkbox"/> Res. No(s). _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing (Info/consent)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Council Business

Prepared By: Christopher Williamson, AICP *CW* Agenda Item No. M-1

Reviewed By: City Manager *JM* City Attorney *ET* Finance *JM* Other (Specify) _____

DATE: January 14, 2015

TO: City Council

FROM: Matthew G. Winegar, Director *MGW*
Development Services Department

SUBJECT: Opposition Letter to the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission Regarding the Proposed Phillips 66 Company Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur Extension Project

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council authorize the Mayor to sign and transmit a letter to the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission expressing the City Council’s opposition to the proposed Phillips 66 Company Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur Extension Project.

SUMMARY

The San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building recently completed a recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project that would extend an existing rail spur of the Union Pacific railroad (UPRR) mainline by an additional 6,915 feet to serve the Phillips 66 Company Santa Maria Refinery, which is located approximately 3.5 miles west of the community of Nipomo in San Luis Obispo County. The EIR identifies a significant hazard impact related to the risk for release of crude oil that results in a fire or explosion in the vicinity of a populated area along the UPRR tracks. Because this significant hazard could affect Oxnard residents and businesses, staff recommends a letter of opposition to the project be sent to the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission, the decision makers on this request. A hearing before the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission is tentatively scheduled in early February, 2015.

Although the Santa Maria Refinery is approximately 110 miles from the City of Oxnard, the construction of a rail spur would allow for up to five deliveries of oil per week on unit trains (freight trains carrying a single type of freight, in this case crude oil) with 80 tanker cars that are 90 feet long each. Combined with three engines and two buffer cars, these trains would be approximately 1.4 miles long. These unit trains would travel to the refinery spur line either from the north through Roseville, or from the south through Colton. The south route passes through several Ventura County cities, including Oxnard. Empty trains would presumably return the same route after unloading.

The risk analysis in the EIR indicates a small probability of an incident that would result in a release of 100 gallons or more of oil, once every 22.8 years over the entire route from Colton to the refinery, with the risk in any single city being substantially less. Nonetheless, the result of a single incident that could result in a fire or explosion could be devastating in any populated area near the UPRR tracks. EIR mitigation includes upgraded tank cars and positive train control, however, such mitigation may be preempted by Federal law. Even if this mitigation were implemented, the impacts would still be considered potentially significant, according to the EIR.

Oxnard has seven at-grade public street UPRR crossings and residential, commercial, and industrial uses are all located adjacent to the UPRR tracks. A local incident with a 1.4 mile long unit train could affect up to three street crossings at the same time and cut off most of the City from our only hospital emergency room.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the Mayor to submit a letter on behalf of City Council to the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission opposing the Phillips 66 Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur Extension project based on its significant hazard impact related to the risk for release of crude oil that results in a fire or explosion in the vicinity of a populated area along the UPRR tracks.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact from submitting the letter of opposition.

CW:cw

Attachment #1 - Letter of Opposition

Tim Flynn
Mayor



Office of the Mayor

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January 13, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL & U.S. MAIL

Honorable Planning Commissioners
San Luis Obispo County
c/o James A. Bergman, Director of Planning and Building
976 Los Osos Street, Room 200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

RE: Letter Requesting that the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission Deny the Phillips 66 Company Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur Extension Project

Dear Honorable Chair and Commissioners:

As Mayor of the City of Oxnard ("Oxnard"), I write on behalf of the Oxnard City Council, to respectfully request that the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission ("Commission") deny the proposed Phillips 66 Company Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur Extension Project, due to unmitigated significant hazardous impacts associated with the transport of crude oil by rail that would result, as identified in the Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The transport of crude oil by 1.4-mile long trains to the Santa Maria Refinery would occur on the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks, either from Roseville or Colton. The City of Oxnard is located in Ventura County along the UPRR between Colton and the Santa Maria Refinery. Oxnard has seven at-grade signalized public crossings of the UPRR tracks that go through the heart of Oxnard, and cross Rice Avenue (State Highway 1) which carries a significant amount of heavy Port Hueneme truck traffic and is a designated U.S. Navy mobilization corridor from Naval Base Ventura County. An incident involving an oil train could result in the closure of multiple crossings at the same time, cutting off most of the City from our only hospital emergency room. Homes, schools, parks, and businesses are subjected to UPRR engine emissions as they traverse Oxnard. Although the EIR for this project identifies the risk of derailment resulting in a spill as small, just one event could be devastating to Oxnard.

For these reasons, the City Council of the City of Oxnard respectfully requests the Commission deny the proposed Phillips 66 Company Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur Extension Project.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments on this project.

Sincerely,

Tim Flynn
Mayor

cc: City Council; Ventura County Board of Supervisors; City Managers of City of Ventura, City of Camarillo, City of Moorpark, and the City of Simi Valley.

ATTACHMENT 1
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