

I-314 Jane and John Ploetz

Comment Letter I-314

From: Jane Ploetz <janeploetz@att.net>
Sent: Sunday, August 13, 2017 3:39 PM
To: Smith, Ashley
Subject: Questions about Newland Sierra Draft EIR

RE: NEWLAND SIERRA DRAFT EIR

Thank you for the opportunity you have given the surrounding community to respond to the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Newland Sierra Development. After reviewing the document at length, we do have some questions concerning the Traffic Impact Analysis Section 2.13.1. We have put them in boldface at the end, and look forward to your replies to them.

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The EIR details a number of specific intersections and road networks on which their project would have significant direct and/or cumulative impacts. One in particular concerns us: the intersection and segment of S. Santa Fe Avenue between Buena Creek Road, and continuing down Santa Fe 400 feet to its intersection at Robelini Drive. Although the Draft EIR inexplicably omits any mention of the light rail station at this location, you will no doubt recognize this intersection as encompassing **the Sprinter Station at 1923 Buena Creek Road** on the roadway to connect with Highway 78.

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This intersection has been **failing at the present level of traffic** for the past nine years, ever since the station stop for the light-rail train was erected in March 2008. Traffic stops completely on Buena Creek at the railroad crossing gates over seventy times a day, beginning at 4:22 a.m. until 10:52 p.m., on an average of every fifteen minutes, Monday through Friday. Passengers unload and load over seventy times a day while traffic must wait, unable to cross the railroad tracks, backing up sometimes for a mile or more on our winding two-lane country road. At rush hour, it is not unusual for commuters to sit through five or six stoplight cycles just to get through the intersection, turn right on South Santa Fe for 400 feet, and then turn immediately left at another stoplight onto Robelini – all to access Highway 78. For safety issues, it is also forbidden to make a right turn on a red light at the Buena Creek/S. Santa Fe intersection -- even for cars who have already crossed the tracks and are waiting on the other side of the tracks. Many commuters from outside our local neighborhood use this popular shortcut to get from Highway 15 to Hwy 78 westbound. It is, as you know, already heavily travelled.

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Sierra Newland notes correctly that there is no way to widen Buena Creek at that intersection, “due to significant right-of-way constraints, including environmental and private property impacts.” In fact, they throw the solution back at the County, saying the County “has prepared constructions plans for the widening and realignment of S. Santa Fe Avenue to connect Sycamore Avenue directly to Buena Creek in a single intersection with S. Santa Fe (S. Santa Fe CIP Project).” They say that if the County would follow through with the CIP Project, it would have a mitigating effect. But they assume no responsibility for the direct and significant impact their project would have on this intersection. In fact, they admit “**for the purposes of this EIR, the project’s direct impacts will be significant and unavoidable.**”

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My questions are:

1. **What is the status of the S. Santa Fe CIP Project? Is there an actual date when the County plans to connect Sycamore Avenue directly to Buena Creek? If not, why not?**
2. **Why would you permit Newland Sierra to be built if it refuses to take any responsibility for significant, unavoidable significant impacts?**
3. **Would the County follow through with the CIP Project by requiring Newland Sierra to assume some, or all, of the financial responsibility?**

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As homeowners off Buena Creek Road for the last 34 years, we feel an investment in this area, both economically and socially.

Finally, after 10 years of meetings between County residents and staff, not to mention the millions of the dollars spent on the development of General Plan, the County Board of Supervisors approved the County's General Plan. When the plan was approved, this Supervisors not only agreed to protect this area from over-development, but they agreed to downzone the entire property to 99 units from 200 units. In an effort to support and respect the integrity provisions of the General Plan, we urge you to recommend against the Newland Sierra development and continue to safeguard this sensitive rural corridor.

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Thank you for your consideration,

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