

I-42 Karen and Kevin Birch

Comment Letter I-42

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Ms. Ashley Smith  
County of San Diego

We are against the Newland Sierra Project! There. I said it. Why you may ask? Ok, I'll spell it out. I-42-1

First, it is our opinion that 60 days is not nearly enough time to review and obtain public comments on an 8k page document that took about 18 months to generate, even though much of it is from the previous developer's (Merriam Mountain Project) plan. Maybe this is by design – not enough time for the public to review and comment or protest. One public comment session is not enough for a project of this scope, that affects so many people. I-42-2

Second, considering the size of this project, over 2,200 houses, the population of the Deer Springs area will more than double. My first question is do we actually need these homes so far away from any city? Does the County actually consider that it needs all of these homes? If so, why did the County spend millions of dollars on the 2020 General plan determining that less than 100 are all that should be built on this property? I-42-3

Third, there will be traffic impacts. Where will these people work? They will not all work in the property area, and in order to afford the cost of the homes, I am presuming that they will be working in San Diego, Carlsbad, etc., which will mean additional traffic on the 15, 78 and 5 freeways, not to mention the city streets through San Marcos and Vista. Who will be paying to maintain and increase those roads and freeways? How can a project of this magnitude even be considered without also considering the impacts to the surrounding freeways and reviewing Environmental Impact Reports for their upgrades? Since Cal Trans is preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Report for Interstate 15, this project should not even be considered until the Cal Trans Draft Environmental Impact Report is submitted, reviewed and approved. What about the added impact to the 78 freeway? Will this be addressed in the Cal Trans Environmental Impact Report? No homes should be occupied until all of the roads and freeways can handle the added traffic. I-42-4  
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Additional traffic concerns – When will the various options be reviewed and/or decided and how are they to be paid for? None of the options in this Environmental Impact Report provide relief to the already existing traffic issues on Deer Sprints Road, I-15 or even Center City Parkway and Mountain Meadows Road. There will need to be a major re-design to the area and that will be paid for by Cal Trans (state of California and therefore California Tax payers) and the citizens of San Diego County. Why is the developer not paying a large share of the expense in these improvements? Or better still, how about having a road with its own freeway I-42-6  
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onramps and offramps, that goes directly into their development? Adding the additional trips to the existing roads and freeway access ramps will only make a bad situation worse. Case in point: Costco in Carlsbad was not allowed to build unless they contributed to the interchange and then, they were not allowed to be open fulltime until the traffic congestion was resolved, meaning they had to be closed during peak traffic hours. As it is, currently, we have to leave our homes for our respective jobs at 7 am to have reasonable commute times. With the added traffic at the Deer Springs interchange, rather than waiting through 1 cycle of signal lights, which is not uncommon, we anticipate sitting through 2 or 3 cycles.

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Fourth, is the question of police and fire protection. These concerns will need to be addressed by the San Diego County Sheriff's Departments and Deer Springs Fire Marshall respectively. Of major concern to us is that with more people, come more crime and more fire potential. Currently this is a rural area with wildlife, so there is very little crime to be concerned about, if you are a resident of the area. We are concerned that this is about to change! If the area gets built out, and a fire starts, the already congested roads will be packed with panicking people!

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Fifth, there are a variety of utility concerns, that the need to be considered and they are as follows:

- Electricity - just this summer we have faced flex alerts and have been asked to conserve our electrical consumption because the state does not have enough power to satisfy the needs of the residents. How can the development be justified, then? Why is the San Onofre power plant still listed as a source of electricity in San Diego, at all, when it is in the process of being decommissioned?
- Water - The Vallecitos Water District has said they will supply water, but this is under the assumption that they can purchase it from the County Water Authority. Where is the guarantee that the Water Authority will have the water to provide? How can that be guaranteed when we have been in a long drought and really have been for our entire lifetimes? On top of that, while we have been asked to conserve due to the droughts, it has been pointed out that the citizens of San Marcos will have to conserve about 36% of their normal use, just in order to satisfy the needs of the new houses. How is this fair to the citizens that already live in the water district? And, what will happen in the next drought?
- Sewer - Where will the sewer be routed? Will they have their own treatment facility or will raw sewage be traveling into San Marcos, to be treated? On top of that, it has been stated that the Vallecitos Water District is at sewer capacity now, so how can they possibly handle the added volume? Will the developer be required to pay for this expansion or, will the residents of San Marcos also be asked to pay additional costs so that the sewer capacity can be upgraded? Or maybe everyone in San Marcos will be asked to cut back on their waste!
- Natural Gas – Where will any natural gas be supplied from? In other words, where will the pipes be coming from, in order to supply the houses?

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Along with all of these, does the County of San Diego think it needs this development? Is there an actual need for the housing or is this a “because we can” decision? Millions of dollars were spent on the County’s 2020 plan and now the county is being asked to set all of that aside to satisfy the developer’s possible greed. I-42-13

Sixth is the animals that live in the Merriam Mountain area. Has anyone truly considered the impacts that all of these homes will have on their habitat? They were here first and deserve to be protected. Mitigation listed in Ramona is not the same as protecting these animals. Will we see more coyotes killed on the freeway, because their habitat is lost and they are trying to find new homes? I-42-14

Additional concerns to the surrounding communities:

- When will the blasting occur? (We already know the estimate is 10 years but will this be every day, only weekdays, and what about the hours?) I-42-15

- How will the public be protected from the silica dust and resulting potential cancer risks from it? Champaign Village is filled with elderly residents, some of whom who already have breathing issues and other health concerns. I-42-16

- How will the communities be protected from accidental fire caused by the construction? I-42-17

- What about potential traffic issues during construction? Are we looking at 10 years of traffic congestion – worse than what we have now? I-42-18

- Where will High School students go to school? Will they be driving through Jesmond Dene to get to Escondido High School? This will increase the traffic on Jesmond Dene and Center City Parkway. Does the Escondido school district even have room for the addition of these students? They are already utilizing portable buildings. Or will San Marcos High Schools be expanded to handle these additional students? I-42-19

- What if there is a fire during the construction/widening of Twin Oaks Valley Road? How will the traffic for the surrounding residents be routed/affected? I-42-20

- How long will it be before the traffic Environmental Impact Report is released and what impact will the changes have on existing traffic congestion? Should not this be approved first? I-42-21

- Quality of life: We, like most of the residents of this area, bought our home with the idea of living in the “county” not the city. Nearly 20 years ago, we had had enough of city life with the crime, noise, traffic, and neighbors so close you could hear their telephone ring and wanted to breath clean air, listen to owls, hawks, crows, coyotes, etc. We chose this lifestyle over city life. I-42-22

So, having said all of this, there is no way we can support a development of this magnitude, in this location, so far away from a city, which is where it belongs. I-42-23

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