

January 10th, 2024

RE: In the Matter of an application submitted by NEXT Renewable Fuels, Inc. for a Modification of Prior Approval for a previously approved Site Design Review and a Conditional Use application for a proposed railroad branchline in the Primary Agriculture (PA-80) zone

Dear Columbia County Commissioners,

My name is Samantha Hernandez and I am the healthy climate program director at Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. We are an organization of over 2,000 health professionals and public health advocates from across the state working to address the gravest threats to health and survival.

Oregon PSR is testifying today to oppose Next Renewable Inc.'s conditional use application for the portion of the rail yard that goes through agricultural land. The construction of a large rail yard introduces the potential for spills. Moreover, a portion of the rail yard on agricultural land will impact infrastructure owned and maintained by the Beaver Drainage Improvement Company (BDIC). Next Renewable Inc. has not provided a thorough analysis of impacts to the BDIC system and those who use the BDIC system for drainage and access to irrigation.

Oregon PSR is also testifying today to oppose Next Renewable Inc.'s proposed modification of the prior approval for the refinery. A rail yard with over 3.4 miles of new proposed rail track will generate noise, light, air, and water pollution. For this reason, the rail yard must be considered a significant impact on neighboring homes, farms, and the nearby Great Vow Zen Buddhist Monastery.

From a health care access perspective, the County must consider the impacts on communities near the proposed rail route. The proposal will involve a significant increase in mile-long trains that block at-grade crossings. Increased delays may disrupt the ability of vulnerable communities to access necessary and emergency health care.

On top of this health care access concern, the potential for water pollution from toxic, flammable materials presents a serious health hazard. Port Westward farmers depend on clean water to raise crops and livestock, and the presence of hundreds of cars

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4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd. #758 Portland, OR

97214 Tel: 503-274-2720 info@oregonpsr.org www.oregonpsr.org



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carrying potentially toxic or flammable liquid fuel or feedstock could harm the health and well-being of the community.

Furthermore, many issues and impacts are not adequately addressed or analyzed in their report. For example, the County's code requires NEXT Renewable Fuels Inc. to demonstrate that "the potential impact upon the area resulting from the proposed use has been addressed and any adverse impact will be able to be mitigated. . . ." NEXT Renewable Fuel Inc. 's cited their previous application for a rail yard in response to this standard which was ultimately invalidated by the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA).

Oregon PSR strongly urges the Columbia County Commission to deny NEXT Renewable Fuels' conditional use application and proposed modification. Oregon PSR also strongly urges the Columbia County Commission to listen to community members who will be impacted firsthand by the approval of NEXT Renewable Fuels Inc.'s railyard.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,



Samantha Hernandez

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

Healthy Climate Program Director

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