

**Columbia County Board of Commissioners Public Hearing Regarding NXT Rail Infrastructure
January 10th, 2024**

Testimony of Elaine Kelley

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There's a big lie going around claiming we need economic growth to live. But you don't have to be an economist or a scientist to see that economic growth itself is the single major cause of environmental degradation and threat to life on earth. There is no such thing as green economic growth. There are only green, sustainable economic practices.

Biofuels is an example of the big lie. Biofuels are considered low-carbon alternatives to gas and oil, but as the demand for biofuels grows exponentially, any benefits will be outweighed by the demand for feedstock. You need huge amounts of organic waste to produce biofuels. NXT's biodiesel is made from cooking oil, fish grease, and animal tallow. As the demand for this "miracle" fuel grows, the demand for the organics needed to make it will grow, too. Decades into the future, as climate change advances, there will be fierce competition for agricultural land and scarce water to grow vegetables to make vegetable oils for feedstock and to grow vegetables to eat. You'll also have to exploit more ocean life, gut more fish to get the grease. Oh, and animal lovers, guard your hearts. Many more of those big brown-eyed, warm-blooded cows will be marched to the industrial factory farm assembly line for slaughter--all for the promise of unlimited hamburgers and cheap flights to Hawaii. Also, cattle emit methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

So much for green biofuels. It's part of the big lie, and oh so very cruel. The green billionaires maybe had some good intentions when they set out to decarbonize transportation, as they claim on the NXT website, with promises that we don't have to reduce our consumption. But we do have to reduce our consumption to stop the long train of life killing habitat destruction and carbon pollution. And there **are** real alternatives, like permaculture or steady state economy, but you won't learn about these things on FOX or CNN because the focus of this nation is economic growth and anything that questions it is a fringe, woke conspiracy.

The truth is we need a different mindset--less rugged individualism and ego and more community and concern for the common good. There's a small vibrant community in Clatskanie already living that vision. They make up the Save Port Westward movement and the Clatskanie Farmers Market. We can learn from them and stop refineries and rails yards from turning a beautiful riverbank and farmland into a grotesque industrial landscape.

One of my favorite books on the subject is *Small is Beautiful* by E.F. Schumacher, an economist who challenges the conventional wisdom of modern economics and advocates for a shift towards more sustainable economic practices. I recommend this book and I recommend a no-vote on the NXT request.