



March 24, 2020

Mindy Wilcox, AICP, Planning Manager
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Re: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Inglewood
Basketball and Entertainment Center (IBEC), SCH 2018021056

Dear Ms. Wilcox:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council and our members in Inglewood and throughout California, we submit the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the basketball arena project proposed by applicant Murphy's Bowl on behalf of the Clippers Basketball team (the "Project").

Introduction

As a preliminary matter, we note that the Project is materially different from that approved by CARB under AB 987. This is so because the projected GHG emissions for the Project are much higher and there is less in the way of mitigation proposed. In short, net operating GHG emissions increased by 63% comparing the DEIR to the AB 987, to 496,745 MTCO_{2e} from 304,683 MTCO_{2e}, while proposed mitigation measures are not as robust. Accordingly, the timing and other project proponent benefits of AB 987 should not apply to the Project.

In addition, the Project relies heavily on statements of overriding considerations to mask the 41 significant adverse environmental impacts that ostensibly cannot be mitigated to insignificance. This is ludicrous in connection with a project that has little or no social utility for the residents of Inglewood who will bear the brunt of these impacts – including more air pollution in an already heavily-polluted area – and who are not the target audience for expensive professional basketball tickets.



Inadequacies in the DEIR

A. Failure To Address Environmental Justice Impacts.

There is no analysis of environmental justice throughout entire DEIR, except for two passages claiming that no analysis is needed: DEIR p. 3.2-16: “As described above, in general CEQA does not require analysis of socioeconomic issues such as gentrification, displacement, environmental justice, or effects on “community character.” And 3.14-56: “There are no applicable federal regulations that apply directly to the Proposed Project. However, federal regulations relating to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI, and Environmental Justice relate to transit service.”

This is incorrect because, among other things, there is a significant federal approval needed for the Project in the form of an FAA approval because of the Project’s proximity to Los Angeles International Airport. Moreover, the California Attorney General has opined that local governments have a role under CEQA in furthering environmental justice; see https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/environment/ej_fact_sheet.pdf (accessed March 20, 2020). The remedy for this failure is recirculation of a DEIR that includes an environmental justice analysis.

B. Use Of Improper GHG Baseline

In its initial application under AB 987, the Project proponent attempted to increase the GHG CEQA baseline by assuming that the venues from which events would move to the Project would remain unused forever on the dates of the transferred events. After pushback from CARB and others, including NRDC, the Project proponent abandoned this irrational approach and conceded that the venues would be in use on those dates.

But the original theory has resurfaced in the DEIR. Having obtained the benefits of AB 987 by changing its initial (unjustified) position, the Project proponent should not now be allowed to revert to that position in order to raise the CEQA baseline and reduce its GHG mitigation requirement.

C. Failure To Properly Analyze And Mitigate GHG And Air Quality Impacts

The South Coast air basin is in extreme nonattainment for ozone, with a 2024 attainment deadline. Failure to meet the attainment deadline can lead to federal sanctions that will effectively shut down the local economy. The South Coast AQMD



plan to reach ozone attainment relies on an enormous level of reductions in oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), mostly from mobile sources such as cars and trucks. But the Project's projected emissions go in the opposite direction and the DEIR fails to require sufficient mitigation.

The DEIR admits this. For example,

Impact 3.2-1: Construction and operation of the Proposed Project would conflict with implementation of the applicable air quality plan.

Impact 3.2-2: Construction and operation of the Proposed Project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase in NO_x emissions during construction, and a cumulatively considerable net increase in VOC, NO_x, CO, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} during operation of the Proposed Project.

Impact 3.2-5: Construction and operation of the Proposed Project, in conjunction with other cumulative development, would result in inconsistencies with implementation of applicable air quality plans.

In addition, the DEIR bases its calculations of criteria pollutants from motor vehicles on the EMFAC 2017 model developed and maintained by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). But EMFAC 2017 is now obsolete because the federal government has purported to rescind the EPA waiver for California's zero-emission vehicle program, and that program's effects are baked into EMFAC 2017. The result is that EMFAC will underreport emissions. That problem will be exacerbated when, as expected, NHTSA promulgates the so-called SAFE rule which will reduce the corporate average fuel emission (CAFE) standards in California and nationwide. This change, which is not reflected in EMFAC 2017, will make the projections in the DEIR substantially too low. This problem is true for transportation-related GHG emissions as well because the zero-emission waiver revocation and lower fleet mileage requirement will result in more GHGs from cars and trucks than the DEIR and EMFAC 2017 assume. Thus, the DEIR underreports projected criteria pollutant and GHG emissions, and that problem will get worse over time.

D. *Failure To Implement All Feasible Air Quality and GHG Mitigation*

Even if the DEIR air quality and GHG projections were accurate, which they are not, the mitigation measures in the DEIR are inadequate, especially given the number of ostensibly unmitigatable impacts.

NRDC

For example, the Project could and should require:

Shuttle buses should be zero-emission vehicles, starting on Day 1. ZE buses are available today from a number of vendors, including BYD in Los Angeles County.

The emergency generators should be electrically powered, and the Project should install more solar panels, and storage for solar power, to power them.

Aspirational mitigation measures and “incentives” to reduce emissions of NOx should be replaced with mandatory measures. The DEIR adopts Mitigation Measure 3.2-1(d), requiring the Project to provide “[i]ncentives for vendors and material delivery trucks to use ZE or NZE trucks during operation.” (DEIR, p. 3.2-71.) Similarly, Mitigation Measure 3.2-(c)(3) only requires the Project to “shall strive to use zero-emission (ZE) or near-zero-emission (NZE) heavy-duty haul trucks during construction, such as trucks with natural gas engines that meet CARB’s adopted optional NOX emissions standard of 0.02 g/bhphr.” (DEIR, p. 3.2-88.) In contrast, Mitigation Measure 3.2-2(c) specifies that use of Tier 4 off-road diesel-powered equipment rated at 50 horsepower or greater “shall be included in applicable bid documents, and the successful contractor(s) shall be required to demonstrate the ability to supply compliant equipment prior to the commencement of any construction activities.” (DEIR, p. 3.2-88.) There is no showing in the DEIR that making Measures 4.3-1(d) and 3.2(c)(3) is infeasible. Given the significant impact on the AQMP, either such a showing of infeasibility must be made and supported by substantial evidence, or the measures must be made mandatory.

Electric vehicle parking for the Project must be provided. The electric vehicle parking needs to conform with applicable building code requirements in place at the time of construction. Electric vehicle charging stations must be included in the project design to allow for charging capacity adequate to service all electric vehicles that can reasonably be expected to utilize this development.

Each building should include photovoltaic solar panels.

The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program must be revised to quantify the criterial pollutant and GHG reductions expected from the TDM measures.

The GHG reduction plan also must be revised so as not to defer development of mitigation measures, and to quantify the measures selected.

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As it stands, the exact content of the GHG Reduction Plan cannot be known from reading the DEIR. Further, the DEIR states that the GHG reductions will Reduction Plan will be modified in a Verification procedure if there are shortfalls in GHG reductions, providing that the methodology for the modification “shall include a process for verifying the actual number and attendance of net new, market-shifted, and backfill events.” (DEIR, p. 3.7-64.) That process is unacceptably vague and indeed the verification process may itself be subject to CEQA as a discretionary project.

Purchase and use of GHG offsets must meet CARB standards for cap and trade offsets. The DEIR’s entire description of this potential mitigation measure is:

Carbon offset credits. The project applicant may purchase carbon offset credits that meet the requirements of this paragraph. Carbon offset credits must be verified by an approved registry. An approved registry is an entity approved by CARB to act as an “offset project registry” to help administer parts of the Compliance Offset Program under CARB’s Cap and Trade Regulation. Carbon offset credits shall be permanent, additional, quantifiable, and enforceable.

Having a CARB-approved registry is not the same thing as requiring CARB-approved offset credits, which are limited in scope and strictly regulated. The residents of Inglewood should not be subjected to a lesser standard.

Additional local, direct measures that should be required before offsets are used include the following:

1. Urban tree planting throughout Inglewood.
2. Mass transit extensions.
3. Subsidies for weatherization of homes throughout Inglewood.
4. Incentives for carpooling throughout Inglewood.
5. Incentives for purchase by the public of low emission vehicles.
6. Free or subsidized parking for electric vehicles throughout Inglewood.
7. Solar and wind power additions to Project and public buildings, with subsidies for additions to private buildings throughout Inglewood.
8. Subsidies for home and businesses for conversion from gas to electric throughout Inglewood.

NRDC

9. Replacement of gas water heaters in homes throughout Inglewood.
10. Creation of affordable housing units throughout Inglewood.
11. Promotion of anti-displacement measures throughout Inglewood.

E. *Displacement Will Be Accelerated By The Project And Must Be Mitigated*

The economic activity and growth inducing impacts created by the Project will foreseeably result in displacement of current residents while rents increase and rental units are taken off the market to be put to alternative uses. However, the DEIR denies that indirect displacement will occur. (DEIR 3.12-16 to -17.)

California courts have acknowledged the human health impacts of proposed actions must be taken into account, *e.g. Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control v. City of Bakersfield* (2004) 124 Cal.App.4th 1184, 1219–1220; *see also* CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2 subd. (a) [EIR must identify “relevant specifics of ... health and safety problems caused by the physical changes.”]). Human health impacts from displacement are real and are not merely speculation or social impacts. There have been numerous cases where health effects to people were inadequately analyzed. (*Communities for a Better Environment v. City of Richmond* (2010) 184 Cal.App.4th 70, 81, 89 [EIR inadequately addressed health risks of refinery upgrade to members of surrounding community]; *Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control, supra*, 124 Cal.App.4th at 1219–1220 [EIR was inadequate because it failed to discuss adverse health effects of increased air pollution]). Here, the DEIR needs to address the effects on the environment and human health reasonably foreseeable as results of construction and operation of the Project.

Conclusion

The DEIR must be revised and recirculated to account for its many deficiencies.

Thank you for your consideration.

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