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Fwd: Excursion Rail

1 message

The BOSFOUR <bosfour@edcgov.us>
To: EDC COB <edc.cob@edcgov.us>

Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 9:29 AM

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From: **Don Rose** <donofthedirt@yahoo.com>

Date: Wed, Mar 18, 2015 at 8:46 PM

Subject: Excursion Rail

To: The BOSFIVE <bosfive@edcgov.us>, The BOSFOUR <bosfour@edcgov.us>, The BOSTWO <bostwo@edcgov.us>, Brian Veerkamp <bostthree@edcgov.us>

To The Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors of El Dorado County:

Item # 13 (13-0606) on the agenda for the March 24 Board of Supervisors meeting is a request by the Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad Inc. (PSVRR) for a rail access permit to operate multiple rail excursions in El Dorado County as detailed in the PSVRR proposed 2015 schedule. This request represents a substantial expansion of PSVRR operations, and I urge you to deny this request for the following reasons:

1. There are unresolved safety issues related to increasing use of the El Dorado Trail by hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.
2. Approval would contradict the Board's decision in March of 2011 to make trail use a priority on the SPTC corridor from Shingle Springs west to the Sacramento County line by giving trains priority and the ability to chase trail users off the trail where it is on the railroad track.
3. A study is underway to determine how best to provide for the needs of all user groups on the corridor. Allowing expanded rail operations before the study is complete is essentially an end run around the study, because once expanded rail operations are established it will be difficult to end them even if the study concludes that another configuration for the corridor is optimal.

The following is an elaboration on the safety issue:

In its proposal, the PSVRR seems to be suggesting that there are no safety hazards for trail users resulting from the operation of excursion trains. Recently, the railroad posted paper signs on traffic sawhorses on certain points along the corridor, specifically at the Deer Creek Bridge and the Latrobe Creek Bridge. The signs, a copy of which is reproduced in the materials submitted by the railroad, advise trail users as follows: "If you see a rail vehicle, calmly and safely move at least 10 feet from the center of the tracks". Apparently, the railroad believes the signs adequately address safety issues for trail users. I disagree.

In the one-mile section between the Deer Creek Bridge and the Latrobe Creek Bridge, there are several points where it will be difficult for trail users to move to a position 10 feet from the center of the track, as follow:

1. Both bridges, where trail users would be required to exit the bridge on one end or the other to avoid the train.
2. The Deer Creek Cut, a deep, curving cut just east of the Deer Creek Bridge. This is an extremely dangerous point, because a trail user standing in the middle of the cut cannot see out either end, due to the curvature, and there is no way to move to a point 10 feet from the centerline of the track.
3. The section just East of the Deer Creek Cut, where the railroad track is on fill, with steep, downward sloping embankments on either side.
4. Other points between the bridges, where there is a downward sloping embankment on one side, and obstacles on the other side, including fallen trees, rocks, an upwardly sloping embankment, and standing water.

Attached are five pictures demonstrating the safety issues. The first picture is of two grandparents walking along the track with their grandchildren. Two of the children are quite young, in the 3 to 4-year-old range. I took this picture from the narrow singletrack trail high up the slope above the track. The singletrack trail is suitable for experienced mountain bikers and hikers, but is too narrow, rocky, and exposed for the family group you see here, given the ages of the people. Therefore, such groups invariably walk down the middle of the track, ignoring the trail up the slope above. This particular group continued on the trail to the Deer Creek Bridge, walking through the cut. If this group had been in the middle of the cut when a rail vehicle approached the cut and sounded its airborne, they would have been terrified, not being able to see what was coming because of the curve of the cut, not being able to move 10 feet away from the track, and perhaps not even knowing from which direction the rail vehicle was approaching due to the echo of the loud airhorn in the cut. This poses a significant safety issue, in addition to potentially significantly reducing the enjoyment of the trail users by forcing them to reverse their direction and walk back to the end of the cut to get out of the way of a rail vehicle. Once bridges are decked, equestrians will be able to access this section of trail, and it will be very difficult to calmly and safely move a horse 10 feet from the trail when a rail vehicle is approaching and loudly blowing its horn.

Attached are other pictures, showing other impediments for trail users to move away from the track, including standing water, which is a result of lack of maintenance of drainage systems.

There are other "pinch points", which create similar safety issues. At the county line, trail users must walk down the middle of the track for approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile, which includes the Carson Creek bridge and its approaches, which are on high fill with steep downward sloping embankments on either side. Again, it's a long section of track where trail users would have difficulty in "calmly and safely" moving 10 feet away from the track. Also, please note that many trail users may not have an accurate perception of what amounts to 10 feet from the centerline, and the distance is not marked, so they may not know how far to move to be safe. One of the attached pictures shows a family of four about to walk across the Carson Creek bridge. Such groups often linger on the bridge to observe and photograph wildlife.

Above Latrobe, there are additional "pinch points", including long sections where trail users use the middle of the track because it is on high fill and impassable otherwise.

I don't believe the signs and practices of PSVRR adequately prevent the safety of trail users from being compromised, and they certainly don't prevent the enjoyment and convenience of trail users from being compromised.

I strongly recommend that the PSVRR's request be rejected, and that no further requests from that organization be considered until the study is complete.

Thank you for your consideration.

Donald E. Rose

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5 attachments



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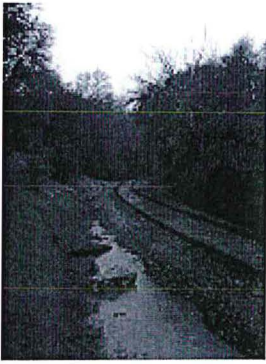


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