

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 8

PLANNING

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Be energy efficient!*

**DOCKET****09-AFC-6**DATE APR 26 2010RECD. MAY 04 2010

April 26, 2010

Mr. Alan Solomon  
Project Manager  
California Energy Commission  
1516 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

Dear Mr. Solomon:

Docket 09-AFC-6, Staff Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Study  
Blythe Solar Power Project (09-AFC-6)  
08-RIV.10, 145.118

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has reviewed the Staff Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Study (SA/DEIS) for the proposed Blythe Solar Power Project (BSPP). The BSPP site will comprise of approximately 9,400 acres of land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The site is eight miles west of the city of Blythe, northwest of Blythe Airport, and two miles north of Interstate 10 (I-10). Access will be off of I-10, the Mesa Drive Interchange to Black Rock Road.

BSPP will consist of a concentrated solar thermal electric generating facility of four adjacent, independent, and identical units. The auxiliary boiler and Heat Transfer Fluid heater for each unit will be fueled by natural gas. A new four-inch diameter natural gas pipeline will be constructed by Southern California Gas Company (SCG) and will connect to an existing SCG pipeline situated 1,800 feet south of I-10.

The BSPP facility will also be connected to the Southern California Edison transmission system at the new Colorado River substation, five miles southwest of the site and crossing I-10. This site is still to be determined.

Project construction during the 69-month construction phase and expected peak 1,004 workforce may cause temporary traffic impacts I-10. Potential transportation impacts and mitigation have been identified and addressed in Section C.10.12-Proposed Conditions of Certification **TRANS-1-7** of the SA/DEIS. We agree with Condition of Certification **TRANS-3** that requires a Transportation Control Plan be formulated to reduce traffic congestion due to the overlapping construction schedules of two other solar projects in the area, Palen Solar Power Project, and Genesis Solar Energy Project.

Although it has not been determined where the generator-tie line would cross I-10, the following comments for your review are not to be considered complete, final or inclusive:

### **SA/DEIS**

- Section C - Environmental Analysis, C.10-Traffic and Transportation, Page C.10-5 Public Transportation – Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

It is stated that bicycles are not allowed on I-10 and that Hobsonway from Mesa Drive east toward the City is a designated Class II Bikeway. Bicycles are allowed on I-10 from Dillon Road, Coachella to Mesa Drive, Blythe. It should be noted in case of potential conflicts that bicycles are allowed on certain State Highways where no alternative route is available.

### **Project Development Procedures Manual Chapter 17 Transverse Utility Encroachment**

- New utility installations, and adjustment or relocation of existing utilities, may be permitted to cross a freeway or expressway. To the extent feasible and practicable, they should cross on a line generally normal to, but not less than 60° from the freeway longitudinal alignment, and preferably under the freeway. The utility should be located in such a manner that it can be serviced, maintained, and operated from outside the right of way, except for special cases covered under "New Utility Longitudinal Encroachments".

### **Permits**

#### Transportation Permit

Caltrans has the discretionary authority to issue special permits for the movement of vehicles/loads exceeding statutory limitations on the size, weight, and loading of vehicles contained in Division 15 of the California Vehicle Code. Requests for such special permits require the completion of and application for a Transportation Permit.

Information regarding Transportation Permit application for travel entering the State or beginning SOUTH of the San Luis Obispo/Kern County lines (includes Inyo and Mono Counties) contact:

SOUTH Region Transportation Permits Office  
464 West 4th Street, 6th Floor, MS 618  
San Bernardino, CA 92401-1400  
(909) 383-4637

Or you may visit our web page at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/permits/contact.htm>

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Encroachment Permits

This project as proposed will require a Caltrans Encroachment Permit prior to any construction within the State RW and shall be in compliance to all current design standards, applicable policies, and construction practices. Please reference Chapter 600, Utilities Permits, of the Encroachment Permit Manual at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/developserv/permits/>

In addition we recommend referencing the Right of Way Manual Chapter 13 <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/rowman/manual/index.htm> and the Project Development Procedure Manual <http://dot.ca.gov/hq/oppd/pdpm/pdpmn.htm> Chapter 17.

Further information regarding permit application and submittal requirements may be obtained by contacting:

Office of Encroachment Permits  
California Department of Transportation  
464 West 4th Street, 6th Floor, MS 619  
San Bernardino, CA 92401-1400  
(909) 383-4526

These comments are based upon a review of the materials provided for our evaluation. Our Operations Staff is still reviewing the SA/DEIS, and additional comments may be provided detailing possible impacts to State facilities as the project progresses. We appreciate the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (909) 383-4557 for assistance.

Sincerely,



DANIEL KOPULSKY  
Office Chief  
Community Planning/Local Development Review

c: Richard Goh, Encroachment Permits Riverside County  
Haissam Yahya, Surveillance Region B  
John Wilson, Wilson Engineering