

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	24-OIIP-02
Project Title:	Informational Proceeding on Lithium Valley Vision
TN #:	256102
Document Title:	Comments from Los Amigos de la Comunidad, Inc for an equitable development
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	LOS AMIGOS DE LA COMUNIDAD, Inc.
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	4/30/2024 4:34:19 PM
Docketed Date:	4/30/2024

*Comment Received From: LOS AMIGOS DE LA COMUNIDAD, Inc.
Submitted On: 4/30/2024
Docket Number: 24-OIIP-02*

Comments from Los Amigos de la Comunidad, Inc for an equitable development

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



April 30, 2024

Commissioner Noemi Gallardo
California Energy Commission
715 P Street Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Public Workshops and Engagement Related to the Proposed Development of Lithium Valley and Lithium Extraction

Dear Commissioner Gallardo,

On behalf of community residents around the Salton Sea region and our organization, we submit this letter with feedback regarding public engagement and outreach efforts related to lithium extraction and the proposed development of Lithium Valley, as gathered from our community outreach and education/engagement program on Lithium Valley conversations with residents across Niland, Calipatria, Bombay Beach, Westmorland, Brawley, North Shore, and Salton City. We are extending our gratitude first for organizing the Lithium Valley Symposium and the Workshop on the Lithium Valley Vision as it is vital to have as many public forums as possible to reach the public on this high priority issue in the Salton Sea region that includes two distinct counties and the damaged air basin we all share locally. We also acknowledge your continued presence in and around the region as an energy commissioner engaging with the community and stakeholders as beneficial to the ongoing community dialogue.

As you plan for future workshops, we wish to emphasize the importance of timely and comprehensive publicity for meetings to reach as many residents interested in the issues as possible. We understand the timing process at times is less than desired by a state agency attempting to put together these forums, but we do recommend publicizing meeting details, agendas, and dates three weeks to one month in advance across various platforms. These notices should provide an overview of how the public can participate, their potential impact, and the benefits of participation, all of which can aid in planning and promoting attendance and having the voices heard of all communities within the region.

We are enthused to see that the first public workshop offered Spanish interpretation and the next ones will also; but accessibility barriers that still exist are the inaccessibility of meeting times and Spanish material. To address this concern, we propose hosting workshops during evening hours to facilitate attendance, especially for those with daytime work commitments. Given the high percentage of Spanish speakers, we also recommend that all information and spaces should be made accessible in Spanish including all flyers, agendas, and all the documents and information within the California Energy Commission webpage; this is and continues to be an issue with our local County of Imperial Website as well and feel it is a disservice to our large monolingual population residing in the Salton Sea region.

From our active participation as an organization in official proceedings locally and state level on the lithium Development here we do have recommendations and issues that need to be addressed:

*First and foremost is ensuring that the allocation of public funds and resources for infrastructure projects be transparent and include the community in the decision-making process so the public may hold decision-makers accountable at all phases. The issue of critical infrastructure and transportation needs, which are huge for this development, holds many potential impacts to the frontline communities and their precarious air quality and human health issues already present due to proximity to the receding Salton Sea. The proposed development will be an immense undertaking and further cause impacts on those issues and the community and organization want to be included in the process and be part of the information dissemination at every step to everyone has a clear understanding of the potential impacts and how they will be mitigated and how to monitor the effectiveness of the mitigation methods for review and continued adapting to the real time impacts.

*A recommendation we have from our outreach is to work collaboratively with stakeholder group representatives and residents to ensure officials at the local, state, and federal levels prioritize funding and development of infrastructure projects to ensure direct community benefits, promote social equity and inclusion for a holistic development. The recommendation includes to publish and have a centralized information center; website, link on website etc.. in culturally competent and relevant languages of the potential public health and environmental impacts of the development so the public may be aware and monitor the issues.

Our last recommendation is in the arena of Community Benefits Agreements (CBA). The state and local officials form agencies directly involved in the development such as the CEC and other state level agencies as well as local agencies and electeds must be part of the process to ensure a fair and equitable CBA that is inclusive of the many areas of concerns to be mitigated with extensive investments in the environmental and human health issues we already face and mitigate all potential impacts of dust exposure that may include long buried pesticides now being exposed with the receding Salton Sea; traffic

issues such as expansion of roads, damaging emission of truck transportation in and around the Lithium Valley region congestion and maneuverability of the residents as this development expands and potentially impairs the frontline community first before actual revenues and potential benefits may be realized.

We thank you for considering our letter and will continue to work on monitoring, engaging and working for a fair and equitable development that ensures the community is engaged, invested in and mitigated. Thank you and feel free to contact me at (760) 550-5153 or at losamigosdelac@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric M. Reyes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "E" and "R".

Eric Montoya Reyes
Executive Director
Los Amigos de la Comunidad, Inc