



**Riverside County
Transportation Commission**

3560 University Avenue Suite 100 • Riverside, California 92501
phone: (909)787-7141 • fax: (909)787-7920 • www.rctc.org

October 17, 2002

Mr. James Bartridge
Siting Office Project Manager
California Energy Commission, MS-40
1516 9th Street, #9
Sacramento, CA 92514-5504

01-AFC-17
CALIF ENERGY COMMISSION

RE: Inland Empire Energy Center Preliminary Staff Assessment

OCT 21 2002

Dear Mr. Bartridge:

RECEIVED IN DOCKETS

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) appreciates the opportunity to review the Preliminary Staff Assessment (PSA) of the Inland Empire Energy Center's Application for Certification. As you know, Riverside County is a rapidly growing area with high demands for both transportation and energy resources. To meet these needs in an effective and efficient manner, the County and RCTC have embarked upon a program to integrate land use and transportation planning with the preservation of environmental resources. The plan is known as the Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) – A Blueprint for Tomorrow. We are pleased that the California Energy Commission, in addition to soliciting our comments on the PSA for the Inland Empire Energy Center, has expressed the desire to review the transportation and land use environmental documents being prepared for the "Blueprint for Tomorrow". Coordination between our agencies, in the acknowledgement of each other's projects, will help ensure that the needs of the residents for both transportation and energy resources are satisfied. To that end, RCTC will continue to work with the Inland Empire Energy Center applicant's team in the development of their project.

The Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP) is the transportation element of the "Blueprint for Tomorrow". The primary purpose of CETAP is to determine where to locate possible major new multi-modal transportation facilities to serve the growing transportation needs of Western Riverside County. This area is severely deficient in east/west access. Currently access to the interior of Western Riverside County from the west is typically via SR 91 through the City of Riverside and up the Box Springs grade to I-215 south. This route is both indirect and congested during the morning and evening peak periods of travel. The major objective of one of these proposed multi-modal facilities, the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore corridor, is to provide a major alternative access route to the interior of Western Riverside County and reduce travel times between Hemet and the Corona and Lake Elsinore areas. The site of the Inland Empire Energy Center is contiguous to one of the

alternative alignments of the proposed Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore transportation corridor.

This alternative alignment, known as Alternative 5c, is the RCTC staff's recommendation as the Locally Preferred Alternative. While the Commission has not yet made a final determination on the alternative for this corridor, we do request that the CEC and the Inland Empire Energy Center team recognize this alternative as a possible site for a future freeway corridor. We will be scheduling public hearings to receive comments on all of the possible alternatives in the December/January timeframe. We would encourage your participation at one of those hearings. We project that the RCTC will make a final selection of a preferred alternative around February 2003. Then we will take the necessary steps to finalize our Tier 1 environmental document. We hope to receive a Record of Decision (ROD) from the Federal Highway Administration around June 2003. A Tier 2 project level environmental document and engineering work will need to be prepared to determine a final alignment. Actual construction of a future facility is not expected for approximately 10 years.

We have engaged in discussions with both the applicant and the Energy Commission staff to identify possible conflicts between the proposed transportation corridor and the Energy Center site. In addition to the plant site itself, the Energy Center includes a natural gas supply line and compressor station and a high voltage transmission line. In analyzing possible conflicts, we considered both operating and construction activities. Following are the results of that analysis:

- The location of the natural gas supply line and the compressor station do not conflict with the proposed transportation corridor under any alignment option being considered.
- Access to the site during construction is not impacted by the transportation corridor alternative because the construction of the Inland Empire Energy Center will be completed prior to start of construction of the transportation corridor.
- Permanent access to the plant site is from Antelope Road. Antelope Road is classified in the County's General Plan Circulation Element as a secondary road in the vicinity of the plant site. The proposed transportation corridor will be designed so that travel along Antelope Road and access to the site will not be impaired.
- A preliminary engineering analysis shows that a 300 foot wide transportation corridor may be located along the northerly boundary of the plant site without impacting the power plant itself. The corridor would occupy the northeasterly 300 feet of the site and encompassed out-parcel, adjacent to the railroad right of way. It would not impinge on any of the planned facilities for the plant, including the switchyard. This alignment has been reviewed with the applicant's technical staff and they are in agreement with the analysis.

- An existing 500kv transmission line tower conflicts with the optimum alignment for the proposed transportation corridor to cross the northern portion of the plant site, as identified above. Two solutions have been identified, either of which will avoid the tower without adversely affecting the plant site or the design characteristics of the proposed transportation corridor.

In summary, RCTC believes the Commission staff's recommendation of the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP transportation corridor is not in conflict with the Inland Empire Energy Center. Further, the County's "Blueprint for Tomorrow" seeks to encourage economic development, thereby reducing the number of trips outside the County and improving the effectiveness of our transportation network, including the new CETAP corridors.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Haley", written in a cursive style.

Eric Haley
Executive Director

Cc: Jim Adams, Environmental Protection Office