



DIANNE JACOB

SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

January 20, 2010

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The Honorable Michael Peevey, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue, Room 5213
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Commissioner Peevey:

As the elected Second District Supervisor of San Diego County, I represent thousands of constituents impacted by the Final Environmentally Superior Southern Route of the Sunrise Powerlink which was approved by the Commission (4-1) on December 18, 2008 (Decision D.08-12-058). Recently, Commission staff provided my office with contact information to share with residents who are concerned about the three-year processing of the Sunrise Powerlink proposal. I appreciate your staff's quick response and willingness to listen to grievances.

Because the Commission is the regulatory agency responsible for overseeing pre-construction mitigation, I respectfully alert you to four problems that have come to light in recent weeks and encourage the Commission's immediate involvement:

1. The need to make the Project Modification Report filed by San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) immediately available to the public with an opportunity for public comment;
- 2) Insufficient notification of public participation under the California Environmental Quality Act, especially to businesses along Alpine Boulevard and people who live in the El Monte Valley in Lakeside;
- 3) The need for a detailed business impact study for the community of Alpine due to the magnitude of the proposed construction along Alpine Boulevard;
- 4) The need for close monitoring of the "Community Councils" recently initiated by SDG&E to identify mitigation measures for communities along the route.

First, I have been informed by SDG&E officials that the utility has filed a Project Modification Report with the Commission which will provide additional information about the project, including details of the construction along Alpine Boulevard in Alpine. It is imperative that the public have access to this report in its entirety.

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Community members need a complete understanding of the details of the project before they can discuss mitigation measures with the utility. I urge the Commission to make the report available to the public immediately with an opportunity for public comment.

Second, because of the massive scope of the proposed undergrounding along Alpine Boulevard, I recently arranged for County staff to present an analysis of the project to the community at an Alpine Town Hall meeting on January 16, 2010. The County's presentation was based on limited information provided by SDG&E thus far. More than 400 people attended.

A great many residents had only recently become aware of the Sunrise project and proposed construction along Alpine Boulevard. Business owners who would be directly impacted by construction activities claimed to have received no notice of the opportunity to comment on the selected route. Several business owners said they were deeply offended by what they perceive as callousness on the part of the State toward struggling merchants during an already challenging economic time.

I am aware that during the three years the Commission processed the Sunrise Powerlink application, there were numerous public hearings held in Alpine. I am also aware that letters of notification were sent to property owners within 300 feet of the Interstate 8 Alternative, Star Valley Option and Star Valley Option Revision. Nevertheless, the glaring problem is this: given the unprecedented scope of the project's environmental review—it generated one of the largest environmental impact reports (EIR) in California history at 11,000 pages—the Commission's efforts did not provide adequate notice to property owners as contemplated by the California Environmental Quality Act.

The simultaneous analysis of multiple routes in the far northern and far southern portions of an enormous region served to confuse, confound and distract property owners who would otherwise have commented on the project and, in fact, desire to do so now. The sheer number of alternatives in the Draft EIR, including the proponent's preferred route in the north, had the effect of minimizing the potential of a route through Alpine.

Above all, SDG&E's steadfast insistence in newspapers and on radio and television, that a southern route was absolutely not feasible muddied the waters even further. Residents who listened to the information presented in the utility's massive public relations campaign are now being penalized for trusting SDG&E.

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It is my very strong belief that additional public comment, particularly in Alpine and the El Monte Valley in Lakeside, is absolutely necessary to ensure that the Commission had all the information it needed when it analyzed what is now the Environmentally Superior Southern Route. It very well may be that additional studies are warranted under CEQA.

Third, the Commission should know that Alpine Boulevard is the community's main thoroughfare. It is critical to the economic health of this small, rural town.

Alpine Boulevard is a vital route for public safety agencies during fires and other emergencies and a key evacuation route during wildfires and others disasters. Without proper planning and due consideration, two years of construction along this County-maintained roadway has the very real potential to decimate businesses, jeopardize public safety and compromise the economic health of an already struggling town.

SDG&E officials have stated publicly that business owners who experience losses due to undergrounding should contact the utility's claims department. I believe this statement is strong evidence that the utility does not understand how important Alpine Boulevard is to the town's economy.

I respectfully urge the Commission to require the utility to conduct a comprehensive business impact study as part of the mitigation for the approved project. Only then can the utility and the Commission know the true impacts of the undergrounding along Alpine Boulevard.

Finally, as you are aware, in an effort to seek input into mitigation measures for Sunrise, SDG&E has created seven Community Councils in areas impacted by the line. SDG&E is not utilizing County community planning groups which serve in an advisory role to the County on land use matters, including some SDG&E infrastructure projects. Planning groups are already in existence, known to community members and comprised of elected representatives of the areas impacted by the line.

Already, the SDG&E councils have created controversy in Lakeside, Alpine and Boulevard. Numerous constituents have complained that SDG&E is not taking sufficient steps to notify residents of the existence of the councils and/or provide details of council meetings. When I requested information about the councils from SDG&E, including whether the councils were open to the public, my questions went unanswered until I was quoted in an article in *The San Diego Union Tribune* questioning the role of the councils. I have yet to receive from SDG&E the names of those serving on the councils.

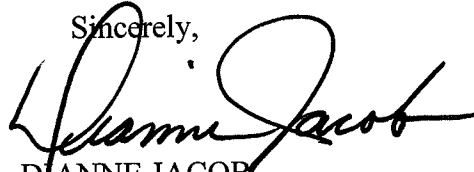
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As the Commission is well aware, many rural ratepayers in areas impacted by Sunrise feel strong animosity toward SDG&E. These negative feelings stem from troubling behavior on the part of the utility: the \$1 million fine SDG&E was ordered to pay for making misrepresentations about Sunrise, the fact that the utility used paid contractors to speak in favor of its controversial shut-off plan before a Commission hearing in Alpine on April 7, 2009 and the utility's efforts to impede the Commission's investigation into the devastating firestorms of 2007.

In an effort to preserve public confidence, I very strongly urge the Commission to closely monitor SDG&E's Community Councils. I believe the Commission should take a proactive and strong regulatory role to ensure that participants are being heard and that community input is, indeed, being used to shape mitigation efforts.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to the four problems detailed above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dianne Jacob". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "J".

DIANNE JACOB
Supervisor, Second District

cc:
The Honorable Dian Grueneich, Commissioner
The Honorable John Bohn, Commissioner
The Honorable Timothy Alan Simon Commissioner
Ms. Billie Blanchard, Project Manager, CPUC