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Public Comment

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From: Andy Caldwell <andy@colabsbc.org>
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To: sbcob
Cc: Hartmann, Joan; Williams, Das; Hart, Gregg; Lavagnino, Steve; Nelson, Bob
Subject: COLAB Comment Letter Climate Action Plan

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Public Comment Letter Item D-4
Board Hearing April 5, 2022

Chair Hartman and Fellow Supervisors,

As one of the only organizations representing business and agriculture in this county that has bothered to follow the painful, expensive, and fruitless efforts by county government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by way of spending inordinate amounts of time, energy, and money, we urge you to take a moment to reflect on the abject failures of your ways.

Back in 2015, the County set a goal to reduce its emissions 15% (below 2007 levels) by 2020 by adopting the Energy & Climate Action Plan (ECAP). The ECAP identified 53 emission reduction measures (ERMs) to be initiated or achieved by 2020. The ECAP estimated that full attainment of the targets established for each of the ERM would help the County reduce or avoid new growth in its annual rate of emissions.

However, instead of reducing emissions by 15%, the emissions in Santa Barbara County increased 14%, meaning you were off target by 29%, on your way to spending well over a quarter of a billion dollars (that amount is just for one of your measures- The Tajiguas Resource Recovery Center).

Your new ECAP strategy includes this little gem: Measures with an educational/outreach component driven by voluntary participation limit achievement potential. Voluntary measures must be complemented with regulatory or administrative mechanisms (read that MANDATE) to assure a target is achieved.

Translation? We are giving up on the concepts of consent of the governed and leading by example, because the public is not following our lead. That reminds me of the saying, a leader with no one following them is just a person on a walk! The fact here is that every single resident right now in this county is FREE to go all electric in their house, to install solar panels at very low cost, and to purchase either an all-electric vehicle or a hybrid vehicle. But you have not been able to convince them to do so voluntarily so now you want to resort to MANDATES! That alone is an admission that the rhetoric about the earth going into meltdown mode in the next 8 years is neither convincing nor fooling anyone, except yourselves and the climate action cottage industry that has been making money on all the same for the past 30 years.

The fact is, absolutely everything you do amounts to nothing more than extremely expensive virtue signaling, lots of activity with zero accomplishments rather than zero emissions. Moreover, the absolutely false proposition that going all electric will result in zero emissions is a crock because California is not an electric energy island. You and your staff are pretending that by becoming members of the Central Coast Community Energy coalition, you will have 100% renewable energy by 2030. But that is simply not true!

The fact of the matter is that California is a member of a Western States electricity consortium that belies the fact that California IMPORTS more electricity than any other state in the union, a whopping 25% of what we consume! All the states we share and derive energy from have no real ability to source separate their electricity production/supplies. In other words, Santa Barbara County and the SCE are paper tigers only. They claim they are going to secure 100% renewable energy but they are no better than the other pigs at the multi-state electricity trough that are sharing electricity that is primarily sourced from coal and natural gas, no matter how much virtue signaling you do in the meantime.

Another aspect of futility has to do with redundancy. Namely, the State of California has its own mandates that have set California on a path of renewable energy and net zero energy use. Hence, if Santa Barbara County does nothing but wait for the state mandates to take effect and achieve their results, nothing will be lost, presumably. On the other hand, the county is spending inordinate amounts of time and energy to replicate what the state is already doing. Why bother?

The biggest lie out there is that we can eliminate our use of fossil fuels entirely by going all electric. But the fact of the matter is that fossil fuels produce many other things than just fuel. The by-products and derivatives of fossil fuels number in the thousands, including things we can't do without. Plastic comes to mind. You can't build an electric vehicle without plastic. Another product? Asphalt. You can't drive an electric vehicle without asphalt roads. Tires for electric vehicles? They, too, are made from fossil fuels. Nylon and polyester clothing? Made from fossil fuels. Solar panels? Made from fossil fuels. So is aspirin. I could list another 6,000 products, but hopefully you will consider the big picture.

The number one new goal of this climate action plan is to forbid gas hookups in new construction. Again, you are so desperate to prove your green street cred, that you are willing to take away people's freedom of choice? The big problem here that you don't want to admit, is that we don't have enough electricity to go all electric with respect to home energy use or in the transportation sector. Moreover, things are going to get a lot worse before they get better if in fact Diablo Canyon shuts down in a couple of years. With the closure of Diablo and San Onofre nuclear power plants, California will have lost a whopping 20% of its base load production of energy, which by the way, was greenhouse gas free! Of course, your board has done nothing to oppose the closure of Diablo, meaning, California is going to have to import that much more electricity from out of state.

Another whopping failure? Public transit. Despite all the shaming and cajoling, not to mention the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on buses, rail, etc., the number of people using public transit has plummeted by a whopping 30% in general, and by 70% via the Clean Air Express and Coast Express services.

Moreover, as your report indicates, across the county, adoption of electric vehicles has barely reached 1% of all passenger vehicles. Even if electric vehicles constituted 15% of all vehicles (matching the State's 2025 goal to reach 15% of sales), the resulting emissions reduction would be less than 2%. What is not included in this analysis? Most electric vehicles are purchased in California more than any other state (40%) and they are driven an average of 5,000 miles per year which means they are not the primary vehicle of the household! How many billions are you going to spend before you realize people don't want what you are selling, er, read that, mandating?

Finally, your board presentation includes the results of a poll conducted by staff about this program. The one point that had overwhelming support from the public was "Let the marketplace sort out which programs are economically sustainable"!!! We could not have said it better ourselves. No more mandates!

Andy Caldwell
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