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Bethel community groups hold meeting about proposed fuels facility

By: Jennifer Singh, Robert Desaulniers
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EUGENE, Ore. – Dozens of people in Eugene’s Trainsong, Bethel, and River Road communities packed into a community meeting on Monday night to discuss concerns over a proposed biofuel transfer station in the Trainsong area.

A proposed facility in the Trainsong neighborhood that would be located adjacent to Bethel Drive would be run by USD Clean Fuels, a Texas-based fuels company. If construction on the facility proceeds, it is expected to come online by late 2025. The company said in a statement that the facility would help advance Oregon’s Clean Fuels Program by creating infrastructure to transport clean fuels through an existing Union Pacific Railroad property in Eugene, Oregon, and serve the surrounding region.

However, local environmental and community groups like Beyond Toxics and the Active Bethel Community are opposed to the facility. Beyond Toxics officials said the proposed facility would transfer biofuels from railcars to trucks, which would have to drive them out along Bethel Drive. Beyond Toxics representatives said up to 40 tanker trucks would be making their way through the area every night, bringing more air and light pollution, traffic congestion, potential for groundwater contamination, and noise in an area that's already been dealing with years of pollution and water contamination from other industrial projects. There are also worries about how flammable and explosive spilled fuels can be.

Lisa Arkin, the executive director of Beyond Toxics, said she wanted to emphasize that the organization is not against biofuels and renewable diesel. However, they are against putting the facility so close to homes and places where children play, and many neighbors at the meeting on October 7 agreed.

"We would like them to pick a place that is not in a neighborhood, not near a park where there's already been contamination in the soil where children play," Arkin said. "They need to locate a facility that will not impact a community."

While the City of Eugene already granted USD Clean Fuels the zoning verification of the site, and approved the land use capability statement, Beyond Toxics has filed a notice of intent to appeal the city's zone verification of the site, is pushing for a traffic impact analysis, and is asking for the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency to not approve the air contamination discharge permit that the company has applied for.

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