

Eugene halts biofuel facility proposal amid community concerns



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Eugene’s Trainsong neighborhood has been proposed as the future home to a USD Clean Fuels transloading facility on Bethel Drive, with planners saying about 40 trucks per day would move biofuels from railcars and take them to market.

Some neighbors have opposed the project, prompting the City of Eugene to withdraw the proposed facility’s zone verification, which determines if proposed uses are allowable on certain types of zoned properties.

Lindsay Selser, the City of Eugene communications and engagement manager for the planning and development department, said the city has withdrawn the Zone Verification decision made for the proposed USD Clean Fuels facility for further review. This now means the city has 90 days from Oct. 18 to determine whether the zone verification decision should be affirmed, modified, or reversed.

“A zone verification decision itself does not allow or deny a particular use of property; it simply evaluates whether a proposed use is permitted outright (i.e., only requires building permits) or whether additional land use applications are required and/or special standards must be met before the use is approved,” Selser said of the zone verification process.

In response to the city's zone verification withdrawal, USD Clean Fuels said it "will continue to follow all applicable state and local processes."

While the city determines its next steps, environmental justice nonprofit Beyond Toxics sees this time as an opportunity for both the city and the community to look closely at what values should be prioritized. Executive Director Lisa Arkin said “Eugene can be a model of environmental justice for all,” as community members have been vocally opposed to the

proposed transloading facility.

“Eugene can exercise its authority to protect our local pollution-burdened communities from corporate targeting and exploitation,” Arkin said in an Oct. 18 press release reacting to the withdrawn zone verification.

A zone verification decision from the city is expected by late November.

“While the fight isn’t over yet, this victory shows we’re on the path to protecting Trainsong from this hazardous project,” Arkin said.

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