

Board of County Commissioners Multnomah County

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners' Statement Opposing Zenith Energy Permit Application

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners opposes the City of Portland's approval of a Land Use Compatibility Statement (LUCS) for the Zenith oil terminal. We understand that this may require legal proceedings and we believe this is a legal fight worth having.

The impact of this decision is not limited to one specific location in Multnomah County, but rather affects the extended use of infrastructure that spans across the entirety of the county. Fossil fuel infrastructure poses grave risks to Multnomah County residents and the environment. Continued reliance on fossil fuels and infrastructure make our community susceptible to increased threats from disaster, accident, and climate change. The Multnomah County Board of County Commissioners formalized our opposition to new and expanded fossil fuel infrastructure in our [2016](#) and [2018 resolutions](#).

Zenith's location in the Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) Hub on the Willamette River is seismically unstable and poses an even greater risk in the event of the inevitable Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. In partnership with the City of Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, the Multnomah County Office of Sustainability commissioned a June 2021 [study](#) of the CEI Hub in Northwest Portland. The study characterizes and quantifies damages that could occur following the Cascadia earthquake or another seismic event. The report revealed that when the Cascadia earthquake hits the aging oil tanks at the CEI Hub, it would trigger one of the largest oil spills in history. Ninety percent of all liquid fuel in Oregon is stored at facilities in the CEI Hub, and the risk this poses to our community and environment cannot be underestimated or ignored.

The risks from the Zenith terminal are not limited to Northwest Portland, as the facility increases the frequency of oil trains in Multnomah County. Trains carrying crude oil through our communities have the potential to derail, causing catastrophic damage. A 2016 Multnomah County [report](#) showed that schools, child care facilities, and approximately one quarter of the County's total population are within a half-mile danger zone around oil-by-rail transport routes. Because of historically discriminatory practices, people of color are more likely to live within a half-mile of a rail line and are therefore at greater risk from any derailment and/or explosion. We

believe that these inequities must be taken into account when making any policy decisions related to fossil fuel infrastructure.

The risk from oil trains is an environmental justice issue, as are risks from climate change, which impact low-income and Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of color first and worst. The consequences of the climate crisis in Multnomah County and Oregon, across our nation and the globe are already horrific. They manifest as extreme weather events — from life-threatening heat waves and wildfires to floods and droughts. Multnomah County has [long sought](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and what our community is demanding now is a rapid transition away from dependence on fossil fuels.

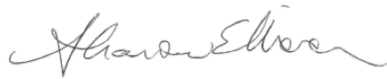
The detrimental impacts of the climate crisis are undeniable and require us to address the kind of energy we prioritize, as well as its infrastructure. While the presence of the fuel storage hazards in Multnomah County will be catastrophic in the event of a large seismic event, if Zenith increases the frequency and volume of oil trains in Multnomah County, those trains and their operations will pose a repeated threat. We cannot afford to move forward with any additional investment in fossil fuel infrastructure that puts our communities and ecosystems at even more risk. We must make policy decisions that protect our shared future and eliminate environmental harms that too often fall disproportionately on vulnerable communities.

In light of these considerations, we strongly oppose the approval of Zenith Energy's LUCS and urge the City of Portland to deny their application. We recognize that this regulatory decision is a step in a larger permitting process, and it is our hope that the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality will subsequently deny Zenith's air quality permit.

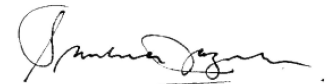
Signed,



Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury



Commissioner Sharon Meieran, District 1



Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, District 2



Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, District 3



Commissioner Lori Stegmann, District 4