

**Statement from
Henderson City Councilwoman Gerri Schroder
Delivered to the Surface Transportation Board
Public Hearing - December 4, 2008**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Department of Energy's Application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to Construct and Operate a Rail Line to Yucca Mountain

The use of any rail line to transport high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel to Yucca Mountain is of great concern to the City of Henderson

By way of background, Henderson is Nevada's second largest city with a population of approximately 270,000 residents, located in the southeast portion of the Las Vegas Valley

The City of Henderson has consistently passed resolutions in opposition of this repository, and transportation to it. On May 11, 1999, the city council passed a resolution opposing the transportation of radioactive and/or hazardous waste through or near Henderson

That position includes rail transportation of high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel, which we feel could be detrimental to the residents of Henderson

The City of Henderson is therefore opposed to a certificate being granted for STB Docket No 35106. My comments today will focus on

- 1 Direct impacts from rail transportation through Henderson
- 2 Direct impacts from truck transportation through Henderson
- 3 Damage to our tourism industry
- 4 Property value impacts, and
- 5 Public safety and first responder concerns

Final transportation routes have not been identified. That leaves open the possibility for the existing rail line in Henderson as a potential route to ship spent nuclear fuel from southern California's nuclear facilities

The Union Pacific Line passes through our city. From the Railroad Pass Hotel, adjacent to highways 93 & 95, the rail line skirts I-215 and crosses I-515. It goes through the heart of the city passing near the Black Mountain Recreation Center, the McCaw Elementary School, the Downtown Recreation Center, Burkholder Middle School and Park, Acacia Park, the Arroyo Grande Sports Complex, Silver Springs Recreation Center and Green Valley Park

By the year 2020, which is generally accepted as the best achievable date for repository operations, the City of Henderson is projected to have a population in excess of 524,000 people. The one-half mile radiological region of influence caused by this highly radioactive cargo will affect thousands of our residents.

Transporting more than 70,000 metric tons of high-level radioactive waste past our schools, hospitals, parks and homes for more than 50 years is not in the best interest of Henderson's citizens. The risks related to routine operations and the inevitable accidents are unacceptable.

Contamination that could result from an act of terrorism is another risk we are unwilling to accept. We would like to see the DOE develop a more comprehensive threat assessment to determine the likelihood of a terrorist attack against high-level nuclear waste shipments. Other concerns about rail transportation include:

- Stop times in populated areas
- Stopping and switching areas in proximity to populated locations
- Preparation of radiological emergency evacuation plans
- Emergency response resources for rail and non-rail related radiological emergencies

The Department of Energy is a shipper that intends to build a railroad to serve its own facility. In spite of the application's Section 10501, it is unclear whether that proposed rail line would, in fact, provide common carrier service to the general public. And, if so, what services and standards would be offered. We are concerned that a shared-use rail line will increase rail traffic, resulting in air quality, sound pollution and emergency response issues.

Congressional funding is uncertain, making the likelihood of expensive common carrier rail construction questionable. The DOE has failed to adequately consider alternatives to the Caliente route, rail security, and public safety management.

We believe there is a strong likelihood of truck transportation through Henderson and other parts of Southern Nevada. Although the DOE has stated a preference for "mostly rail" transportation, no feasible alternative to the Caliente rail route has been designated in the EIS. If the Caliente rail line were not built, truck transport would be the only alternative for shipping.

Truck transportation of high-level radioactive waste could leave the City of Henderson vulnerable to economic, health, security, and emergency management impacts. In addition, no design approval currently exists for TAD canisters, further adding to the prospect of adverse consequences to truck transportation.

Henderson is also home to a number of premier resorts with an average occupancy of 81 percent. Our city hosts nearly a half million visitors annually, generating more than \$307 million dollars for our economy. Many of our hotels are near the rail line and major

highways, including Railroad Pass, Hawthorn Inn, the Fiesta Hotel and Casino, Hilton Suites and the Green Valley Ranch Resort

The Department of Energy has acknowledged the potential negative impacts of public perception if a radiological accident should occur anywhere in the Las Vegas Valley during the shipping campaign

Even routine operations of visually conspicuous shipments through communities produce social risks. To quote a National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine report, "These activities may have direct impacts on quality of life, property values, and/or business activities, especially if they persist over extended periods of time."

We believe the resulting stigma from a shipping campaign, particularly if an accident occurred, would seriously impact our local economy. Studies conducted by Clark County indicate significant residential, commercial and industrial property value losses if a transportation accident were to occur in or near Henderson. Additional costs to fire, police and emergency management public safety agencies would be in excess of a million dollars, by conservative estimates.

In conclusion, the City's priority is to protect the interests, health and safety of our residents. Given the abundant and significant socioeconomic, health and public safety dangers outlined, we oppose the proposed repository. We oppose the DOE application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, and we support on-site storage of spent nuclear fuel at existing power plant locations.