

Barstow International Gateway Project



City of Barstow
San Bernardino County, California



Barstow General Plan 2048 / BIG Project

- The Barstow City Council certified the Barstow International Gateway (BIG) Final EIR and approved the General Plan, BIG Specific Plan, Development Agreement and Tentative Tract Map in June 2026.
- This **\$4 billion private investment by BNSF** Railway builds on Barstow's long history as a railroad town, while delivering economic, environmental, and equity benefits locally and statewide, with infrastructure and long-term revenue to support public services.
- Over its first 20 years of operation, BIG is expected to deliver **substantial economic benefits** to the City of Barstow, including:
 - Approximately **5,400 new direct jobs**
 - \$938 million in total earnings
 - **\$2.9 billion in total economic output**

*"The Barstow International Gateway project epitomizes our commitment to a bright future for the city, and we're proud to partner with BNSF Railway to bring thousands of jobs, billions in economic output and major infrastructure improvements to Barstow." – **Mayor Tim Silva**, June 17, 2026*



Barstow Community Benefits

- Tax revenue generated by **BIG will support local schools**, including the Barstow Unified School District
- BIG will supplement existing programs at **Barstow Community College** by adding **new programs aligned with industry standards** to meet specific employer needs
 - **Building opportunities for Barstow residents and surrounding communities**
- Additionally, tax revenue generated by BIG will support **improved public services**, purchase of a new ladder truck and additional staffing for firefighters and police beyond what is needed to service BIG, providing a citywide benefit
- **Upgrades of city infrastructure**, including flood management, bridges and roadways and purchase of maintenance equipment





BIG Project Status

- BIG's certified EIR was not challenged by any government agency, including the California Air Resources Board and South Coast Air Quality Management District, but was challenged by a group of NGOs.
- Litigation should be resolved by May 2027 (due to SB 149 certification that streamlines judicial review and shortens the trial court and court of appeal process to approximately 270 days)
- Delaying action on LAFCO 3280 and 3281 until after May 2027 will delay the positive Project impacts to the community, and all the benefits it will provide.
- **We appreciate your consideration** of our request to override the Litigation Policy, especially given the project's certification on SB 149.



LAFCO Policy Override Request

- The City of Barstow has submitted reorganization applications entitled LAFCO 3280 and 3281.
- The City and BNSF submitted a request to override LAFCO Litigation Policy on August 24, 2026 and believe an override is warranted.
- LAFCO Policy allows the Commission to override the policy (Chapter 4.1) regarding completion of CEQA litigation prior to processing applications for reorganizations.

The City respectfully requests your consideration to this policy override request for LAFCO 3280 and 3281.



THANK YOU!



City of Barstow
San Bernardino County, California

BIG Benefits



First of Its Kind Rail Facility in the U.S.

- Allows for more efficient **transfer of cargo** directly between ships and rail
- Maximizes rail and distribution efficiency **regionally** and across the **U.S.** supply chain
- Improves fluidity and reliability of rail corridor
- **Reduces truck and freeway congestion** by eliminating approximately 800,000 truck trips each year
- **Net decrease in GHG emissions**

Economic Benefits

- 62,000 direct, indirect and induced construction jobs, including union construction jobs and approximately 15,000 direct, indirect, and induced operation jobs.
- Estimated construction economic benefit is approximately \$11 billion and operational economic benefit is approximately \$7 billion statewide.
- It will provide over \$4 billion in operation economic benefits County-wide.



BIG Supports a Fluid and Efficient Supply Chain



BIG will provide additional efficiency, resiliency and reliability as recognized in the 2024 State Rail Plan by:

- Dramatically reducing the need for truck trips and corresponding reduction in emissions and highway congestion
- Distributing rail freight staging and processing efficiency away from ports and into parts of California with more space and ability to accommodate freight development
- Reducing or eliminating the need for drayage moves by promoting on-dock rail and alleviating chassis shortage issues



"The Barstow International Gateway is the first facility of its kind to be developed by a Class I railroad. The facility will provide the space to sort the containers that arrive on ships within 130 miles of the port. Instead of requiring many truck trips to move the containers to this location, the containers will be expeditiously loaded onto trains regardless of their final destination. Organization of the containers and their contents will take place at a new facility near the location of the long-time classification yard in the Barstow-area desert."

- California State Rail Plan, p. 41

Governor's Certification Under SB 149



- BIG is the first transportation-related infrastructure project certified by the Governor under SB 149, and one of only 10 transportation projects that will receive this designation.
- BIG is a critical infrastructure project that advances the goals of the [Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure \(CAPTI\)](#).
- The Governor determined that:
 - The Project represents a \$4 billion private investment in California, will help reduce congestion in port adjacent communities, improve supply chain reliability, and support the transition to a zero-emission freight system.
 - BIG would result in mode shift from heavy duty truck to rail that would removes hundreds of thousands of truck miles annually from the national, regional and local highway network
 - The Project will minimize impacts to disadvantaged communities
 - BIG results in net reductions of GHG emissions
- BIG will serve Californians for decades by strengthening the state's freight infrastructure, supporting climate and air quality goals, and delivering long-term economic opportunity.



Thank you



Information presented to the Commission during
the 9-16-2026 LAFCO hearing.

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SEP 15 2026

LAFCO
San Bernardino County

To the City of Barstow and LAFCO

My name is Warren Wallis, I have owned my home at 32959 Amarylis since 1980.

This property is in your proposed annexation. I am against the annexation. I have heard the annexation will not affect me. I don't think this is true. If you get the annexation approved I expect to have all kinds of special requirements if I want make any improvements that require a permit. My biggest concern is when I go to sell my property I won't be able to sell it as a residence. If I am wrong about these concerns please put it in writing that nothing will change. I have found this city has a short memory.

I do not agree with moving this application forward under "overriding considerations".



Warren Wallis

warren.wallis@outlook.com

760-963-1470

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LAFCO
San Bernardino County

September 13, 2026

Dear Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County,

Thank you for sending notice to the households that requested notification in July 2026 of any upcoming Public Hearings.

It is to our understanding that LAFCO has a policy of deferring processing of applications when a proposed project is under litigation.

It is to our understanding that the Agenda for September 16th, 2026, places for Discussion the Consideration of Request for Override of Commission Policy Related to Deferral of Processing Application for Projects.

This procedural decision is of extreme importance to homeowners and taxpayers.

It is our understanding that LAFCO may use the environmental impact review for the Barstow International Gateway Project to rely upon in the application process.

With respect to the Final EIR under CEQA challenge:

We respectfully ask that no overriding considerations be made without complete process with the litigation.

People before profits is not looking out for health and safety of the public.

As impacted residents (Annexation Zone B) and nearby Community Members (Annexation Zone A & B) we deserve a voice. Only those who initiated contact by letter to LAFCO received notice. What about the neighbors 1,350 from the proposed area? Was proper notice sent?

For background understanding, the City of Barstow, County and BNSF did not meet with the Sylvan Avenue Community until 2024. That is 2 years AFTER their public outreach with surrounding towns and businesses began in 2022.

The County of San Bernardino, at that time - District Staff, between the months of 11/2024 and 01/2025 did not even realize that this community existed between a series of phone calls and emails. Noted - "I only see the homes on the paved roads." (according to the map that was viewed while on the phone with the District Staff). Our question was, we have a 5-digit address and pay our property taxes - how could they not know we existed?

Clarification occurred weeks later, that the map "needed to be zoomed out."

We as a community, have been engaged in the process from the beginning: the Scoping Meeting, the Town Halls, the City Council Meetings, County Meeting, Mojave Water Meetings, Mojave Desert Air Quality Management Meetings, South Coast Air Quality Management Meetings and more.

At the time of preparing this letter, we have a FOIA – Freedom of Information Act – request regarding a fire near the West Side of Barstow near the BNSF railroad tracks without progress. The incident occurred on August 5th, 2026, with 4 (four) Emergency Crew Vehicles dispatched. On August 18th, a public records request was made with the City of Barstow as per their official website instructions (submitted 13 days post incident). At the time of writing this letter, the public records request remains Assigned – with no movement. It is now 26 days -still with no answers. This fire was in 3 separate burn areas, right across the street from our residences.

Furthermore, there was an issue of an abandoned modular home that was involved in a motor vehicle accident that was from a property purchased by BNSF. We watched for weeks, that section of home decay – unsafely. It was made known to the Lead Agency, the City of Barstow and County. The County of SB reported it back as having asbestos and needed special handling. There it sat longer and we wonder, if A) there was actually asbestos in a fairly recent constructed modular? B) were there really safety precautions taken, if so?

We would like to have our private water wells (~32 homes on private wells) and community wells (containing approximately ~42 homes) monitored. Mojave Water Agency has spoken many times about the uncertainty of water. Will our wells be drawn down to failure (8 new BNSF wells will be developed for construction) and cumulative add onto the Lynx Rock Quarry also drilled multiple water wells that will carry large volumes of ballast and aggregates to the BIG Project, growing the quarry from approximately 49 acres to a total mining footprint of ~ 243 acres. The cumulative impact is real. Private wells, storage tanks, water trucks, and water trailers will all be active due to this project.

We believe we must look at the cumulative impact before considering the overriding consideration to go against LAFCO's own Commission Policy.

We are directly in the middle of this project footprint. Sound, Noise, Vibration, Light, Air, Water, property values and our health are being SIGNIFICANTLY and UNAVOIDABLY impacted.

For these reasons, we again, respectfully do ask that this consideration to not move forward until litigation is fully satisfied.

If this Annexation should go through:

We as a community would like to see that the Annexation Zone A and B, be mitigated with a Sound/Vibration/Aesthetics Wall to help us sleep at night from the thresholds of sound/vibration that we will experience affecting health, as well as help us maintain property values.

We would also like consideration of the same mitigation the City residents of Country Club Drive (just the next street over) received for rubberized asphalt for Annexation Zone B, at minimum.

We would like to also have posted speed limits for residential, especially Annexation Zone B, of no higher than 35 miles an hour.

We would also appreciate signage to indicate NO Truck Parking or idling alongside the Sylvan Avenue, Amarylis and Gazana Street roadways.

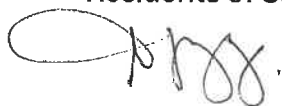
We would also like to note the difficulty we have when calling in Law Enforcement Services – neither party initially recognizes us. We get sent to call the other agency. Confusion for all parties, when we are just trying to get help. Same as when we were trying to determine our County Supervisor lines and City.

Also, if Annexation of Zone B occurs – what happens to Amarylis, Sylvan, Ivy, Prairie, Spinet, Osage and the other side of Gazana? Will the designation of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community still exist for those roads? How will the next 5 years of maps be certified?

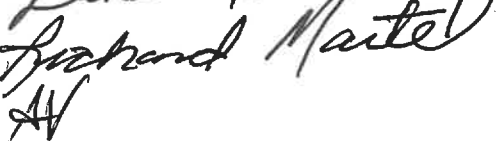
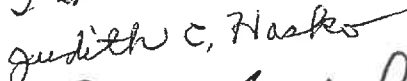
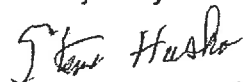
We have tried to be good neighbors to the City of Barstow and BNSF. Please, we ask – just to be as valued constituents as those in the City of Barstow, who get to vote on what happens in our back yards, and we – regrettably do not.

With utmost respect for policy and procedure,

Residents of San Bernardino County,



Sherry Baily



To include:

At this time, there is no reason for LAFCO to proceed with the annexation before litigation is complete, because if a judge rules against the City of Barstow/BNSF, LAFCO will need to reverse the annexation. This will cause a lot of confusion and chaos regarding services and who is providing them. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

September 15, 2026

SUBMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Chair Farrell and Commissioners
San Bernardino LAFCO
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San Bernardino, CA 92415
lafco@lafco.sbcounty.gov
rebecca.lowery@lafco.sbcounty.gov

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SEP 15 2026

LAFCO
San Bernardino County

**RE: Agenda Item No. 9: OPPOSING Request for Override of LAFCO Litigation Policy
(Chapter 4.1) for Reorganization Applications LAFCO 3280 and LAFCO 3281**

Dear Chair Farrell and Members of the Commission,

This letter is submitted on behalf of Sierra Club, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Center for Biological Diversity in opposition to the Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County ("LAFCO" or "Commission") Agenda Item No. 9 regarding "Consideration of Request for Override of Commission Policy Related to Deferral of Processing Applications for Projects Pending Settlement of Litigation Related to LAFCO 3280 and LAFCO 3281" requested by the City of Barstow and BNSF Railway Company.

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose staff's recommendation for the Commission to waive or override its policy requiring the conclusion of environmental litigation prior to holding the public hearing to review and consider annexation of both LAFCO 3280 and LAFCO 3281. The Commission received two annexation applications from the City of Barstow related to the Barstow International Gateway Project identified as the following:

- LAFCO 3280 – Reorganization to include Annexations to the City of Barstow, Barstow Fire Protection District, and Odessa Water District, and Detachments from the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District, its North Desert Service Zone, and its Zone FP-5, and County Service Area 70 (Area A); and
- LAFCO 3281 – Reorganization to include Annexations to the City of Barstow and Odessa Water District, and Detachment from County Service Area 70 (Area B).

We request that the Commission reject the City of Barstow and BNSF's requests to waive LAFCO's policy for these two annexation applications. Neither the City nor BNSF has provided any good reason for the Commission to stray from its existing policy. Overriding the Commission's policy here will only lead to administrative confusion, uncertainty for local residents, additional costs, and waste of administrative resources.

The undersigned organizations challenged the City of Barstow's Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") for the Barstow International Gateway Project and Specific Plan ("BIG" or "Project") under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") (the "Action"). This Action is currently pending before the San Bernardino County Superior Court. The parties are actively briefing the merits of this Action, and the hearing date is scheduled for November 10, 2026. It is unnecessarily premature for the Commission to override its policy while this matter is currently proceeding before the court.

Neither the City nor BNSF has provided any good reason for the Commission to stray from its existing policy. As the City and BNSF noted in their letters, the Action is subject to judicial streamlining under Senate Bill 149, which requires that any legal challenge must be, including any appeal, resolved within 270 days of certification of the administrative record, to the extent feasible. Therefore, this Action will likely be resolved no later than April 2027. There is no good reason for the Commission to depart from its policy and rush to approve these two applications when it may need to revert these actions within a matter of months.

Moreover, it is important to note that despite the emphasis placed on the SB 149 process by both the City and BNSF, nothing in the certification or statute can be read to presume a particular outcome of the CEQA litigation. The simple fact that this Project is subject to streamlined judicial review has no bearing on the likelihood of a favorable outcome for the City and BNSF, and neither request to override the LAFCO policy provided any evidence demonstrating that approval of the Project and certification of the EIR will be upheld by the court. To the contrary, the City violated CEQA when it approved the BIG Project, such that the Commission should anticipate that the court will require any annexation of LAFCO 3280 and LAFCO 3281 be promptly reversed.

The BIG EIR is deficient for numerous reasons, including but not limited to the following: the EIR lacks an accurate, stable, and finite project description and engages in impermissible piecemealing; it failed to provide an adequate set of project objectives; it failed to adequately analyze a reasonable range of alternatives, adopt feasible project alternatives, and make adequate findings supported by substantial evidence that alternatives are infeasible; it failed to accurately describe the environmental setting for the Project; and it failed to adequately disclose, analyze, and/or mitigate the project's environmental impacts to air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, energy, noise and vibration, water, biological resources, environmental justice, and cumulative and growth-inducing impacts. Further, the City included significant new information in the Final EIR such that it was required to recirculate the EIR for public review and comment but failed to do so. In the likely event the court finds in favor of the petitioners on any one of these or other issues, the Commission will be required to reverse any premature reorganization approvals.

We oppose staff's recommendation and respectfully request the Commission uphold its existing policy requiring the conclusion of environmental litigation prior to holding the public hearing to

review and consider annexation of LAFCO 3280 and LAFCO 3281. We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Yasmine Agelidis

Tyler Szeto

Colleen Fitzgerald

Earthjustice

On behalf of Sierra Club, East Yard

Communities for Environmental Justice,

and Natural Resources Defense Council

Peter Broderick

Seth Alston

Center for Biological Diversity

Alison Hahn

Natural Resources Defense Council

On behalf of East Yard Communities for

Environmental Justice and Natural Resources

Defense Council

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Information presented to the Commission during
the 9-16-2026 LAFCO hearing.

SEP 16 2026

LAFCO
San Bernardino County

From: Whitney
To: LAFCO
Subject: 9/16/26 - Public Comment Item #9 Local Agency Formation Commission for SB County Mtg
Date: Tuesday, September 15, 2026 6:22:14 PM

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Hello Local Agency Formation Commission Members for San Bernardino County,

My name is Whitney Amaya and I live in Long Beach, California. I'm reaching out to you as a resident who is directly impacted by freight transportation, and deeply concerned about the additional impacts the BNSF Barstow International Gateway Project will bring to my community, Barstow, and communities in between. Due to the deeply flawed Environmental Impact Report, there is an active lawsuit to address the flawed document and lack of proper mitigation measures to protect the health and safety of communities from Barstow to Los Angeles and Long Beach. **I urge you to oppose overriding the Commission's policy and wait until litigation is resolved to make any decisions on LAFCO- 3280 & 3281.** LAFCO staff have noted that the Commission's policy was adopted after previous annexations had to be unwound when courts later found problems with the underlying environmental review, causing chaos and confusion.

I stand in solidarity with Barstow residents and other communities directly impacted by this project. Before making decisions, please engage Barstow residents, listen to concerns of communities and address their questions and needs. The actions you take have a direct impact on their health, safety, and quality of life.

Please do NOT override the Commission's own policy.

Thank you.

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Information presented to the Commission during
the 9-16-2026 LAFCO hearing.

SEP 16 2026

LAFCO

San Bernardino County

From: Mar Fam

To: LAFCO

Subject: Request to Enter Public Comment into Administrative Record – Items 9 & 10 (September 16, 2026, LAFCO Meeting)

Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2026 6:37:59 AM

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Please enter my public comment on items 9 & 10 on today's LAFCO meeting agenda 9/16/2026 in the administrative record.

Good morning, Commissioners,

My name is Dena Martel, a resident of the Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community of Sylvan Avenue, located near the Barstow International Gateway site and adjacent to Areas A and B. I respectfully ask the Commission to defer Items 9 and 10.

Sylvan Avenue is directly affected by these annexations. Some residents are included in the proposed annexation areas, while others remain unincorporated. Our households rely entirely on private domestic wells.

For the record, I ask LAFCO:

1. Does LAFCO recognize Sylvan Avenue as a Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community?
2. If so, where is that reflected in the record for Items 9 and 10?
3. If not, what area was evaluated, and what is the basis for concluding Sylvan does not meet DUC criteria?
4. Will this determination apply to future annexations affecting Sylvan or will it be reconsidered with each proposal?

As residents living adjacent to Areas A and B, we have concerns about our private wells, groundwater reliability, air pollution, noise, lighting, fire protection, and emergency response as industrial development moves closer to our homes. These are the types of community conditions typically reviewed in annexation proceedings and illustrate why Sylvan Avenue's status is important.

The Final EIR identifies significant and unavoidable impacts within the Sylvan community.

Environmental approvals underlying the BIG project are under judicial review, and the outcome could affect project approvals, mitigation measures, or protections that may apply to nearby residents.

Approving these annexations now could set a permanent boundary before the courts decide whether any changes or additional protections are needed.

Please do not override the Commission's deferral policy. Please defer Items 9 and 10 until the court's decision is issued.

Thank you,

Dena Martel

9/16/2026