

PUBLIC COMMENT ON SEPA ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

SE-26-00001: Easton Travel Center

Kittitas County Community Development Services

Applicant: Majestic Group LLC (AJ Sandhu)

Tax Parcel No. 778834 — Adjacent to Exit 70, I-90, Easton, WA

April 28, 2026

To: Kittitas County Community Development Services

411 N. Ruby St., Suite 2

Ellensburg, WA 98926

Email: CDS@CO.KITTITAS.WA.US

Email: bradley.gasawski@co.kittitas.wa.us

RE: Public Comments Opposing SE-26-00001, Easton Travel Center SEPA Environmental Checklist

Dear Kittitas County Community Development Services and SEPA Responsible Official,

I am submitting these comments in strong opposition to the proposed Easton Travel Center near Exit 70 in Easton, Washington. After reviewing the SEPA Environmental Checklist and related application materials, I believe the proposal presents significant unresolved concerns regarding transportation, groundwater protection, air quality, noise, lighting, public safety, emergency services, land use compatibility, wildlife, recreation, and rural character.

The current checklist does not provide sufficient analysis, quantification, or enforceable mitigation to support a Determination of Non-Significance. Given the scale, location, and operational nature of the proposal, additional environmental review is warranted before any approvals are considered.

Although the application describes the project as a “travel center,” the proposed use appears to function as a large-scale truck stop. The project includes fuel storage and dispensing, truck accommodations, 24-hour operations, and approximately **8,560 projected daily vehicle trips**.

This level of traffic and operational intensity is not consistent with a small-scale rural commercial use serving the local Easton community. The environmental review should evaluate the project based on its actual function and foreseeable impacts, not merely the terminology used in the application.

1. Transportation, Traffic, and Safety Impacts

The projected traffic volume of approximately **8,560 daily vehicle trips** is substantial for a rural community of Easton's size. The checklist does not appear to adequately disclose the percentage of heavy truck traffic, even though that information is essential to evaluating roadway safety, congestion, noise, emissions, pavement impacts, and emergency response demands.

The traffic analysis should not be limited to ordinary weekday conditions. Easton experiences seasonal congestion, winter weather impacts, recreation-related travel, and I-90 closure or diversion events. The proposed facility's location near Snoqualmie Pass further heightens the need to evaluate snow events, freight traffic, accident conditions, and emergency response scenarios.

The County should require a comprehensive traffic impact analysis that evaluates Level of Service, interchange capacity, truck percentages, weekend and peak recreation traffic, winter weather, I-90 closures, emergency diversions, frontage improvements, and coordination with WSDOT.

2. Groundwater, Stormwater, Fuel Handling, and LOSS System Risks

The proposal includes fuel storage and handling, large paved surfaces, stormwater infiltration, and a Large On-Site Sewer System. These features create ongoing groundwater and surface water concerns, particularly in a rural setting near Lake Easton, Silver Creek, and sensitive environmental resources.

Standard stormwater controls and oil/water separators may reduce risk, but they do not eliminate the potential for fuel spills, petroleum residue, contaminated runoff, heavy metals, wastewater impacts, or snowmelt contamination. The checklist does not appear to provide sufficient analysis of long-term groundwater protection, stormwater capacity, spill response, CARA impacts, LOSS system risks, overflow scenarios, or monitoring requirements.

The County should require a detailed stormwater and groundwater protection analysis, including fuel spill modeling, contaminated runoff and snowmelt management, LOSS system impacts, long-term monitoring, maintenance responsibilities, and enforceable mitigation measures.

3. Air Quality and Operational Emissions

The checklist does not appear to adequately evaluate long-term operational air quality impacts. A 24-hour truck-serving facility would generate emissions from diesel truck traffic, idling, overnight parking, Auxiliary Power Units, fueling activity, and potential backup generator use.

These impacts are not limited to construction. They would be continuous operational impacts associated with the daily function of the facility. Diesel emissions, including particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, should be evaluated in relation to nearby residences, recreation areas, sensitive populations, and cumulative regional traffic patterns.

The County should require a comprehensive operational air quality analysis, including diesel emissions, truck idling, APU use, overnight truck parking, generator use, cumulative PM2.5 and NOx impacts, and mitigation measures such as electrified truck parking and enforceable anti-idling requirements.

4. Noise, Lighting, and Visual Impacts

The checklist does not provide adequate analysis of long-term operational noise. A truck stop operating 24 hours per day would generate continuous noise from idling engines, APUs, refrigeration units, air brakes, fueling activity, truck circulation, and nighttime vehicle movement. These impacts are materially different from occasional pass-through traffic.

The proposal would also introduce significant lighting from parking areas, buildings, signage, vehicles, and security features. In a rural area with low existing ambient light, nighttime lighting and glare should be evaluated carefully.

The County should require a 24-hour operational noise study, a lighting and glare analysis, visual impact simulations, signage restrictions, landscape screening, and enforceable operational mitigation to protect nearby residents, recreation users, wildlife, and Easton's rural character.

5. Public Services, Emergency Response, and Fire Risk

The checklist appears to minimize impacts to fire protection, law enforcement, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, and public safety. A 24-hour facility with fuel storage, truck parking, and thousands of daily trips would reasonably increase the likelihood of traffic collisions, medical calls, fuel spills, vehicle fires, hazardous materials incidents, and law enforcement calls.

Easton does not have the same emergency service capacity as an urban or regional commercial center. The community relies on regional response systems and volunteer capacity. The environmental review should evaluate whether existing services can safely absorb the increased demand created by this proposal.

The County should require a full emergency services impact analysis, including coordination with local fire districts, EMS providers, Kittitas County Sheriff, emergency management, hazardous materials responders, and wildfire response agencies. The applicant should be required to provide enforceable mitigation, emergency response planning, funding commitments, and on-site safety protocols before any approval is considered.

6. Public Safety and Crime Prevention

A 24-hour interstate truck-serving facility also raises public safety concerns that should be addressed as part of the review. This includes potential impacts related to theft, assault, drug activity, human trafficking, and other criminal activity associated with high-volume transient traffic corridors.

This concern should not be interpreted as a criticism of truck drivers as a group. Rather, it reflects the foreseeable public safety demands associated with a large 24-hour interstate facility in a rural community with limited immediate law enforcement capacity.

The County should require a public safety and security plan addressing law enforcement coordination, lighting, surveillance, emergency protocols, human trafficking awareness, and on-site management responsibilities.

7. Wildlife, Habitat, and Environmental Resources

The checklist acknowledges the presence of wildlife and environmental resources but does not appear to propose adequate measures to preserve, protect, or enhance habitat. The project would introduce land clearing, impervious surfaces, continuous traffic, diesel emissions, lighting, noise, and human activity into an area near forested land, water resources, recreation areas, and wildlife habitat.

The County should require a biological assessment and habitat mitigation plan, including consultation with appropriate state and federal agencies, evaluation of impacts to migratory birds and wildlife movement, lighting controls, buffer protections, and long-term ecological mitigation.

8. Recreation and Community Character

Easton is a rural mountain community closely connected to Lake Easton, camping, hiking, cycling, fishing, boating, snow recreation, endurance events, and outdoor tourism. These recreational resources are part of the community's identity and should be considered in the environmental review.

A high-volume truck stop at this location could affect recreation users and visitors through increased traffic, noise, lighting, air emissions, safety concerns, and visual impacts. The checklist does not appear to adequately evaluate these impacts.

The County should require analysis of impacts to Lake Easton State Park, nearby campgrounds, cycling and marathon events, recreation routes, peak weekend traffic, tourism, and the rural recreation experience.

9. Land Use Compatibility and Rural Character

This proposal raises a fundamental land use compatibility issue. A high-volume, 24-hour, interstate-oriented truck stop does not appear consistent with the scale or character of Easton. The project should be evaluated against the intent of the applicable rural land use designation,

including whether it is compatible with LAMIRD-3 designation, the Growth Management Act, and rural character protections.

The applicant should not be permitted to rely solely on zoning compliance to avoid a meaningful compatibility analysis. SEPA requires evaluation of actual probable impacts. A use may be allowed in theory but still create significant adverse impacts in a specific location.

The County should require a formal land use consistency analysis before proceeding further.

10. Cultural and Historic Resources

The checklist does not appear to provide sufficient review of potential tribal, archaeological, or historic resources. A database search alone should not be considered adequate where grading, excavation, imported fill, and ground disturbance are proposed.

The County should require a professional cultural resources survey, formal tribal consultation, and an Inadvertent Discovery Plan before any ground disturbance occurs.

My Requested Actions

For the reasons outlined above, the current SEPA checklist does not adequately analyze the probable significant adverse impacts of the proposed Easton Travel Center. The project's scale, 24-hour operations, fuel storage, truck-serving function, projected traffic volume, and location within a small rural community create impacts that require further study before any threshold determination is made.

This proposal is not merely a local convenience use. Based on the applicant's own projected traffic data, the facility would generate approximately 8,560 daily vehicle trips and function as a high volume, 24 hour, interstate-oriented truck stop. That level of intensity is materially different from the rural scale and character of Easton.

The checklist does not adequately account for continuous truck traffic, diesel emissions, overnight idling, APU use, noise, lighting, traffic conflicts, fire risk, public safety demands, or impacts to nearby residential properties, forested land, recreational uses, wildlife, cultural resources, and Easton State Airport.

Given the number and significance of these unresolved issues, a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance would be premature and inadequate. The County cannot responsibly determine that this proposal will not have probable significant adverse environmental impacts without requiring additional technical studies, independent review, enforceable mitigation measures, and a full evaluation of cumulative and long-term operational impacts.

I respectfully request that Kittitas County take the following actions:

1. **Issue a Determination of Significance pursuant to WAC 197-11-360 and require preparation of a full Environmental Impact Statement before any further project approval is considered.**
2. **Require the applicant to provide complete technical studies**, including but not limited to traffic, stormwater, groundwater, air quality, noise, lighting, wildlife, fire risk, emergency services, cultural resources, and visual impact analyses.
3. **Require independent third-party review** of the applicant's environmental, traffic, stormwater, groundwater, and public safety claims before relying on them for any threshold determination.
4. **Require a comprehensive traffic impact analysis** addressing daily truck volumes, Level of Service, interchange capacity, I-90 closures, winter weather, emergency diversions, peak recreation periods, frontage improvements, and impacts to Easton State Airport and wildfire response operations.
5. **Require a complete stormwater and groundwater protection plan**, including analysis of contaminated runoff, snowmelt, fuel spills, CARA impacts, infiltration risks, overflow scenarios, long-term monitoring, and enforceable maintenance obligations.
6. **Require a full operational emissions analysis**, including 24-hour diesel emissions from idling trucks, APU use, possible generator use, cumulative PM2.5 and NOx impacts, and mitigation such as electrified truck parking and enforceable anti-idling requirements.
7. **Require a biological assessment and wildlife mitigation plan**, including consultation with appropriate state and federal wildlife agencies and proposed measures to preserve, protect, and enhance affected habitat.
8. **Require a 24-hour operational noise study**, including nighttime conditions, truck layover periods, idling, APU noise, cumulative low-frequency noise, and impacts to nearby residents, wildlife, campgrounds, and rural quiet.
9. **Require a corrected land use and surrounding area analysis**, accurately identifying nearby residential properties, Silver Ridge Ranch Campground, forested DNR/WSU land, agricultural/resource lands, recreational uses, and the incompatibility risks associated with placing a large-scale truck-serving facility in this setting.
10. **Require visual, lighting, signage, and glare analysis**, including nighttime impacts and measures to preserve Easton's rural and natural character.
11. **Require analysis of recreation impacts**, including impacts to Lake Easton State Park, local campgrounds, cycling events, marathons, tourism, outdoor recreation routes, and peak event traffic.
12. **Require a professional archaeological and cultural resources review**, including tribal consultation, a cultural resources survey, and an Inadvertent Discovery Plan developed in coordination with affected tribes.
13. **Require a full public services and emergency response capacity analysis**, including coordination with Kittitas County Sheriff, fire districts, EMS providers, emergency management, wildfire response agencies, and hazardous materials responders.
14. **Require enforceable mitigation measures and accountability mechanisms**, including clear monitoring duties, maintenance responsibilities, inspection schedules,

emergency response protocols, funding commitments, and penalties or corrective measures if systems fail.

15. **Address the fundamental land use question before proceeding further**, including whether a high-volume interstate truck stop is consistent with LAMIRD-3 designation, the Growth Management Act, rural character protections, and the intended scale of development for Easton.

Until these issues are fully studied, disclosed, and mitigated, the County should not issue a Determination of Significance or allow the project to proceed through environmental review on the basis of the current checklist.

Easton is a small rural community with limited emergency service capacity, important environmental resources, nearby residences, recreation assets, and a distinct rural character. A project of this magnitude warrants the highest level of environmental review available under SEPA.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully, though with serious concern,

Emily Cantu-Individually and as a member on behalf of Friends of Easton