

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

September 18, 2012

Since 1999 this Board has taken a number of actions in support of the development of conversion technologies as alternatives to landfills. "Conversion technologies" are capable of converting waste into useful products. Research conducted by the U.S. EPA, CalRecycle, and by our own Department of Public Works concluded that conversion technologies have the capability to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills, decrease air emissions, and create jobs.

Conversion technologies are also capable of recovering a variety of marketable products and producing local renewable power and transportation fuels, from materials that would otherwise be disposed in landfills. For example, the solid waste currently sent to landfills by Los Angeles County residents and businesses each year could potentially produce over half a billion gallons of renewable biofuels.

These technologies are already successfully operating in over 28 countries worldwide. However, certain provisions in California State law and regulations have created uncertainty regarding the permitting of these facilities and their ability to receive renewable energy credits, thereby hampering their development in California. Many companies have decided not to pursue projects in California due to risk and uncertainty associated with the current regulatory system.

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There does appear to be some movement on this issue in Sacramento. In a recent letter to a private conversion technology company, Governor Brown expressed support for legislation that would allow a conversion technology project to proceed on a pilot basis and be considered an eligible renewable energy resource under State law.

Conversion technologies are critical to ensuring Los Angeles County's ability to manage its waste in the future, thereby protecting public health and safety, and the environment. For this reason, Los Angeles County must seize the opportunity and continue to lead in this effort, working diligently with State officials and legislators, other municipalities, scientists, industry representatives, and other key stakeholders to modernize State and Federal law and regulation to support, rather than discourage, these promising technologies.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Works, in conjunction with the Chief Executive Office, to work with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and other key stakeholders to:

1. Actively pursue and support the passage of State and Federal legislation and regulations that would establish a clear pathway to encourage the development of conversion technologies; including clarification of the definition of conversion technologies and ensuring they qualify for appropriate incentives for producing renewable energy, reducing landfill disposal, and producing low carbon fuels.
2. Support legislation to provide renewable energy status and to continue to provide diversion credits and other incentives for energy production at existing facilities in Los Angeles County that generate energy from waste.
3. Outreach to State agencies and other stakeholders to share information on the technical performance and multi-faceted benefits of conversion technologies, such as their role in meeting the solid waste management needs of local jurisdictions, producing green fuels, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Work with conversion technology companies to identify potential regulatory changes that are necessary to streamline the permitting process to allow conversion technology facilities to flourish in California, while complying with California's strict environmental standards.

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