

The Board of Supervisors

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Contra Costa County



John Cullen
Clerk of the Board
and
County Administrator
(925) 335-1900

December 4, 2007

Mr. Anthony A. Batarse, Jr.
President, Port of Oakland
530 Water Street
Oakland CA 94607

Dear President Batarse:

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors today authorized me to send you this letter, offering our comments and suggestions regarding the Port of Oakland's Martinez Subdivision Project.

The Board of Supervisors understands the importance of the Martinez Subdivision Project in terms of improving the Port's competitiveness for West Coast freight. We recognize it will benefit the region's economy, and we appreciate your staff's attendance at the November 26 meeting of our Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee to discuss the project with us.

We support infrastructure projects that have economic benefits for the East Bay. We also have an interest in seeing that such projects are implemented in the best possible way, to avoid or minimize impacts they may have on communities along the Martinez Subdivision corridor.

We offer the following constructive comments to you in hopes this will assist the Port as the project moves forward. In the months ahead we expect our staff will work with your staff, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and other agencies to examine the project's potential impacts and develop ways to mitigate those impacts.

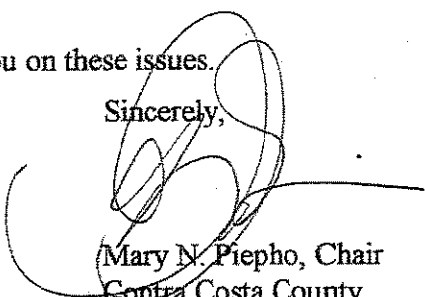
1. It is important for Port representatives to begin discussions with the affected neighborhoods along the Martinez Subdivision corridor. This would include cities and unincorporated county areas. Our staff has offered to help facilitate these local neighborhood-level discussions. Impacts such as noise, traffic backups at crossings, diesel particulate emissions, and safety concerns, among others, are already of concern to neighborhoods along the railroad tracks in Contra Costa County. The project's expansion of railroad capacity will have the potential to magnify these impacts unless appropriate mitigations are developed. We will need the communities' input on these mitigations. We believe that discussion of these issues in public community forums cannot begin soon enough.
2. There also will need to be an interagency working group, comprised of the staffs of the Port, MTC, local jurisdictions, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and other relevant agencies to jointly evaluate potential impacts and develop ideas for mitigations in a collaborative manner. The railroads also should participate in this effort. At our November 26 Committee meeting, Port staff indicated their willingness to participate in such a working group.
3. Grade separations, where possible, will be an important mitigation. Contra Costa County believes that the cost of grade separations, and other necessary mitigations, must be included in the total overall cost estimate for the project. We understand these costs may not yet be available by the time the Port's application for Proposition 1B Trade Corridor funds must be submitted to the state in early 2008, but in the near future we must obtain estimates of the cost of the mitigations and these should be considered as part of the overall total cost of the project.

4. Emissions are an increasingly critical area that must be evaluated before the project can be implemented. We will need an assessment of the project's contribution to emissions, to help us work out the mitigations necessary for such impacts. Western Contra Costa County has a significantly higher rate of childhood asthma and other respiratory ailments than other parts of the County and the Bay Area as a whole. This is due at least in part to diesel particulate emissions from the freight transportation system. We hope the project will provide an opportunity to develop new ways to mitigate these impacts. Emissions affect all the communities along the UP Corridor and all should be involved in the discussions of this issue.
5. The Port also should contact our rail-dependent industries in Contra Costa County, such as the Chevron refinery in Richmond, the Conoco-Phillips refinery in Rodeo, and Shell in Martinez, to determine how the Martinez Subdivision project would impact their operations. Several of these facilities are planning expansions, and they may need to increase their rail transportation as well.
6. Members of our Board of Supervisors have received contacts from the trucking industry, indicating their concerns about the project. Many of our trucking firms here are small independent trucking operators, and we want to ensure that their viewpoint is heard and their needs are taken into account if the Martinez Subdivision Project proceeds.
7. Contra Costa County has had particular problems with railroad tank cars being stored on railroad side tracks, or "sidings" for days and weeks at a time. In some cases these tank cars display the "hazardous material" symbol. We consider it unacceptable for such materials to be stored at publicly accessible locations – in one instance, right across the street from a Headstart children's facility – and we have had little success in persuading the railroads to move them. If the Martinez Subdivision Project leads to increased train traffic in the railroad corridor, this could in turn lead to an increase in the need to use sidings to store trains or tank cars. The Board wishes to express its serious concerns about this; we need to find ways to reduce train storage on sidings.

Once again, thanks to your staff for meeting with us to discuss the Martinez Subdivision Project. If you have any questions about our views on the project, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. Your staff may contact John Greitzer in the Community Development Department at (925) 335-1201 to discuss these issues further.

We look forward to working with you on these issues.

Sincerely,


Mary N. Piepho, Chair
Contra Costa County
Board of Supervisors

Thank you for your consideration!
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- C: Members, Board of Supervisors
J. Amdur, Port of Oakland
J. Acosta, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
D. Barry, Community Development Director
E. Grossman-Bukowski, Port of Oakland
L. Hammon, West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee
W. Lujan, Union Pacific Railroad
T. McMillan, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
R. Sawyer, Contra Costa County Health Services Dept.
M. Shim, Public Works Director