



BELLINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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May 24, 2011

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Randel Perry
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Re: Scope of EIS for Proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal in Whatcom County

Dear Sirs:

With this letter the Bellingham City Council wishes to express our belief that the proposed expansion of the Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point will have significant consequences for the community of Bellingham, and therefore the scope of the anticipated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should include assessment of the consequences of increased cargo rail traffic passing through Bellingham. Bellingham Mayor Pike has already expressed similar concerns, in a statement on March 11, 2011. The Mayor and City Council are firmly in agreement that the scope of any EIS should include the entire transit corridor through our community and not just the proposed terminal's rural site in Whatcom County.

Among the off-site impacts that should be included in an impact study, we identify briefly the following general concerns created by the great increase in cargo rail traffic through Bellingham:

- Transportation: From at-grade rail/street crossings, frequent traffic delays and increased emergency vehicle response times, and effects on passenger rail traffic
- Noise: Effects of train warning whistles, particularly under newer regulations for whistle volume; general noise from train engines and moving rail cars
- Air Quality: From coal dust as well as from increased diesel engine emissions
- Economy: Decreased value of properties located along the rail line, or located on water-side of the rail line, due to negative effects on transportation, noise level, and air quality

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We would like to draw particular attention to the possibly harmful effects of a large increase in rail traffic on redevelopment of the Waterfront District, a billion-dollar, generations-long cornerstone of Bellingham's long-term plans for growth and economic development. In partnership with the Port of Bellingham, the City will be relying upon Waterfront redevelopment for future economic prosperity and job growth, for additions to the productive tax base, for social and recreational opportunities, and for long-term population growth management, among many other Waterfront goals. If unmitigated, the great increase in train traffic has the potential to undermine Waterfront growth and investment by creating significant problems with noise, traffic blockage, air pollution and safety concerns, thereby putting at risk millions of public dollars and thousands of potential jobs. We believe these issues must be considered alongside the many other potential benefits, changes, opportunities, and costs that the proposed marine shipping project is likely to bring.

In this letter we do not take any position, one way or the other, on the many other aspects of the proposal by SSA Marine, which we trust will receive full public review by various government authorities.

We understand that the application for this project has not yet been filed, and the EIS process will not formally begin until that has occurred and a SEPA/NEPA determination has been made. We are glad to have been informed that the City of Bellingham will be duly notified and given the opportunity to participate in the official public process once it begins. The views and opinions expressed in this letter anticipate that process.

Thank you for taking into serious consideration the legitimate interests and the concerns of the people of Bellingham, both now at this pre-application stage and throughout the permit review process to come.

Sincerely,



Stan Snapp, President
Bellingham City Council

CC: Pete Kremen, Executive, Whatcom County
Dan Pike, Mayor, City of Bellingham
Charlie Sheldon, Director, Port of Bellingham
Jane Dewell, WA State Office of Regulatory Assistance
Barry Wenger, WA State Dept. of Ecology
Dan Mahar, Northwest Clean Air Agency