



King County

**Larry Phillips**  
Councilmember, District Four  
**Metropolitan King County Council**

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JACK LOUWS  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

May 24, 2012

The Honorable Jack Louws  
Whatcom County Executive  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Ted Sturdevant  
Director  
Washington State Dept of Ecology  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504

Brigadier General John R. McMahon  
Commander, NW Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
PO Box 2870  
Portland, OR 97208-2870

Dear Executive Louws, Mr. Sturdevant, and Brigadier General McMahon,

As you prepare for the upcoming draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point, a facility to be used primarily for coal export, I wish to offer the following comments and concerns.

I represent King County Council District Four, which encompasses over 200,000 residents of several northwest Seattle neighborhoods through which the coal trains will pass on their journey to Cherry Point, including the Downtown Seattle Waterfront, Interbay, Ballard, Sunset Hill, North Beach, Blue Ridge, and Broadview. My constituents are gravely concerned about this proposal and opposition is growing.

Common themes include the following concerns:

- Negative impacts on **quality of life and public health** from noise and air pollution from diesel engines and coal dust emanating from open rail cars. With up to twenty coal trains a day traveling through our community, each over a mile-long, and with each car losing up to 500 pounds of coal dust en route, the cumulative amount of pollution, and increased linked respiratory diseases in our population, could be significant.
- Impacts on **traffic and safety** could be significant. A single train can obstruct a rail crossing by 6 minutes or more; 20 trains would mean blocking some crossings by 2 hours per day. Access to the northern portion of the Downtown Seattle waterfront from northwest Seattle is dependent on several railroad crossing points. Pedestrian and vehicle safety must also be considered; the tracks traverse busy pedestrian corridors in my Council district, and I anticipate long waits and increased incidences of rail-pedestrian and rail-vehicle accidents. Cumulative effects of increased train vibration on landslide-prone soils may also pose risk to the rail line and adjacent private property.



- Chilling effects on **residential and commercial development** along the rail line. Due to increased noise, pollution, and traffic impacts from coal trains, property values in communities alongside the rail line could drop, and investments in new housing and retail could be hampered.
- **Congestion on the tracks** impedes current and future freight, passenger and commuter rail service. Frequency of Amtrak and Sounder commuter rail trips are already limited by existing freight loads on the BNSF tracks. The addition of significant volumes of coal trains would appear to severely limit any expansion of freight and popular passenger rail service, or perhaps even require reductions in current service. This would hamper commerce and divert commuters and travelers from rail, resulting in more congestion and pollution on our region's roadways.
- Accelerated **climate change** resulting from burning coal for fuel. Coal is a dirty, carbon-intensive fuel, and exporting large quantities of it to other countries in order to develop overseas coal-based energy infrastructure—and the associated greenhouse gas emissions—will make it even more difficult to stabilize global climate change. Our state came together in 2011 to phase out the only remaining coal-fired power plant in Washington; exporting coal through our region does not match our residents' priorities and values.
- Negative impacts to the **shoreline environment** at Cherry Point. The proposed terminal site would fill wetlands and sit on herring habitat, the primary food source for endangered Chinook salmon, which are in turn, the main food source for imperiled Orca whales, a potentially significant impact on the ecology of Puget Sound and adjacent waters.

I appreciate the opportunity to pass along these initial concerns on behalf of my King County Council district, and look forward to continued involvement in this important issue that directly affects my constituents.

Thank you for considering these concerns as part of the EIS process.

Sincerely,



Larry Phillips, Councilmember  
Metropolitan King County Council, District Four

cc: The Honorable Christine Gregoire, Governor, State of Washington  
The Honorable Peter Goldmark, Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands  
Steve Gagnon, Project Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Alice Kelly, Regional Planner, NW Regional Office, WA Dept of Ecology