



## My Word: Port of Oakland commissioners need to show true leadership

By Anthony Iton, Brian Beveridge and Jack Broadbent

Guest commentary

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WE APPLAUD the Oakland Tribune editorial, urging that Port of Oakland commissioners "Must get serious about clearing the port's air." (April 15)

On April 7, Port of Oakland — the fourth-largest container port in the United States — fumbled badly on a critical opportunity to show true environmental leadership when commissioners voted to ignore strong scientific and experience-based clean air recommendations from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, California Air Resources Board, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, local environmental, labor and community groups, neighborhood residents and Alameda County Public Health and Environmental Health departments.

In a 5-1 vote, the port adopted a toothless and noncommittal Maritime Air Quality Improvement Plan, effectively devaluing the health of those who work at or live near the port and its major transportation routes, and deferring instead to large retailers and global shipping interests who prefer to avoid responsibility for cleaning up the pollution created in the course of moving their goods.

True, the commissioners funded a two-year stakeholder process specifically intended to develop an air quality plan that reduces emissions and improves the health of Oakland residents. But the port's plan ultimately does little more than reiterate a statewide goal of 85 percent reduction in health risk

by 2020.

Port management and the commissioners refused to act on the recommendations of many task force members (including two of the four co-chairs) and all regulatory agencies to include measurable programs to achieve clean air goals.

West Oakland residents are exposed to three times more diesel particulate matter (soot) than other Bay Area residents. West Oakland residents have the highest rates of asthma hospitalizations in Alameda County, 2.5 times greater lifetime risk of cancer, and live on average 14 fewer years than other Oakland residents who live only a few miles away.

West Oakland residents and truck drivers are literally subsidizing the transportation of goods with their health. The price they are paying is in lung cancer, emphysema, heart attacks and premature death. There is no need for this.

Cleaner fuels, exhaust emission reduction technologies, and alternative power systems exist for reducing harmful impacts of maritime shipping on workers and local neighborhoods alike. The Port of Los Angeles has proactively addressed air quality; the Port of Oakland can do the same.

The next defining opportunity for the port commissioners to show leadership in improving air quality and remedy this injustice, will be through the June adoption of a comprehensive truck management program. This program must include clear actions, time lines and funding mechanisms to clean up truck emissions. Without such specifics, it remains unclear what directives the Port is willing to offer local trucking businesses, which face new state regulations Jan. 1, 2010.

What is needed is a sustainable, economically viable air quality plan that ensures the cost of

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reducing airborne toxins and carcinogens is borne by the shipping industry and the retail sector whose products are being transported and not low-income truck drivers and community residents. Oakland deserves better.

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