Bay Area Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative

March 17, 2010

Port of Oakland
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Oakland, CA 94607
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To Mr. Omar Benjamin and the Port of Oakland:

As members of the Bay Area Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative, including community residents of neighborhoods that are disproportionately affected by the environmental impacts of freight transport, we are writing to strongly urge you to include a community-based perspective through local speakers at your 2010 Northern California MegaRegion Summit. The Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative was shocked that a goods movement conference with a special emphasis on the Port of Oakland and the former Oakland Army Base neglected to include speakers that can share the interests and perspectives of residents and community organizations in the area who value and understand sustainable planning. We strongly believe that there should not be private-public partnerships created without impacted residents sitting at the table contributing to the process and agenda.

The Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative is a regional alliance of over 20 Bay Area grassroots community-based organizations, labor, environmental science and public health non-profit organizations. The work of the Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative is directed by impacted residents from low-income communities of color in the Bay Area, including West Oakland, East Oakland, Richmond, San Leandro, and Bayview Hunters Point (San Francisco). Poor air quality where we live, work, play, worship and learn impacts us, our families, and our neighbors.

The absence of a community voice at this conference is glaring and ignores the contributions we have made for the Oakland Port and the Bay Area (MegaRegion):

1. Community groups partnered with the Port in lobbying for Prop 1B funds to make sure Oakland received its share of infrastructure funds.
2. Community groups continue to lobby and advocate for statewide/Pacific-wide container fees so Oakland will not have a competitive disadvantage while having a steady source of funds for mitigation and infrastructure improvements.

1 We respectfully direct you to our personal testimonials in our report “Paying With Our Health: The Real Impact of Freight Transport in California” (available: http://www.pacinst.org/reports/freight_transport/PayingWithOurHealth_Web.pdf) should you wish to know more about our personal encounters with goods movement sources.
3. As active participants in creating the Goods Movement Action Plan, community groups worked with allies to ensure real mitigation measures were included. After considerable debate, the Governor finally promised that there must be “simultaneous and ongoing mitigation efforts” with the infrastructure improvements. He also added, “Clean air is an important part of the infrastructure.” This was an important achievement since many of the California Port regions are not in compliance with Air Quality standards.

4. Local community activists around the State have been active in the discussions related to rail expansion to support freight transport and bring a valuable community and regional perspective that is not being voiced at this conference. For example, MTC is not familiar with the local conflicts proposed rail changes create for communities in Martinez.

We know that this conference will bring together key government officials and business representatives who already have ideas on how to keep California economically competitive and how to redevelop the Oakland Army Base. It is critical that these leaders move forward knowing how their plans can help or hinder the communities and families of West Oakland and other environmental justice communities throughout the MegaRegion. Additionally, any redevelopment project requires active participation from the local community; why would you not include those voices in this important conference?

We would like to recommend that you include the following speakers to your agenda:

- **Margaret Gordon**, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, Oakland Port Commissioner, (510) 257-5647
- **Karen Pierce**, Bay View Hunters Point Community Advocates, (415) 581-2459
- **Wafaa Aborashed**, Healthy 880 Communities – San Leandro (510) 347-4620 x124

Thank you in advance for considering this request. We would like to believe that the Chamber of Commerce, Port of Oakland, and City of Oakland value the voices, perspectives and contributions of community members by allowing those who have been “paying with our health” to actively participate at the MegaRegion conference table.

Please let us know if you have any questions by contacting Andrea Tacdol, DDDC Staff Associate, at (510) 435-4343. We would appreciate opportunities to work with you more collaboratively on issues regarding regional freight transport, the Port of Oakland and the former Oakland Army Base.

Sincerely,

**Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative**

Wafaa Aborashed            Joel Ervice
Healthy 880 Communities – San Leandro  Regional Asthma Management and Prevention

Frank Gallo            Margaret Gordon
Transportation Justice Working Group  West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project

Karen Pierce
Bay View Hunters Point Community Advocates