

RESOLUTION NO. 1280

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF EDMONDS EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT IMPACTS FROM INCREASED RAIL TRAFFIC IN EDMONDS RESULTING FROM THE PROPOSED SSA MARINE GATEWAY PACIFIC RAIL TERMINAL PROJECT LOCATED IN WHATCOM COUNTY AND REQUESTING THE PRINCIPAL AGENCIES REVIEWING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) FOR SAID PROJECT, INCLUDING WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY, AND THE UNITED STATES CORPS OF ENGINEERS, STUDY AND IDENTIFY THE IMPACTS TO THE CITY OF EDMONDS, AND THAT AT LEAST ONE OF THE EIS SCOPING HEARINGS BE HELD IN EDMONDS

WHEREAS, SSA Marine proposes to develop a coal and commodities export facility called Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT) located in Whatcom County near the Cherry Point area of Bellingham Washington; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County, Washington Department of Ecology and the United States Corp of Engineers have entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) to jointly promulgate a required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and are currently scoping the EIS for the GPT project; and

WHEREAS, potential adverse impacts from the proposed GPT project, such as reduced air and water quality, increased noise levels, decreased ability to provide effective emergency response, increased risk of accidents, and impediments to transportation and pedestrian movements, will be experienced by communities along rail line corridors within the Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, the City of Edmonds is concerned about the probable adverse economic and environmental impacts to our community resulting from increased rail traffic; and

WHEREAS, as a result of future GPT operations, an addition of nine to eighteen coal related trains per day, each with up to four engines and 125 cars and/or 1.5 miles in length, would equate to approximately one additional coal train every 1.3 hours passing through Edmonds, all day long, in addition to existing and projected train traffic; and

WHEREAS, Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail lines run along 4.5 miles of Edmonds' coastline which is lined with single and multifamily homes, the Port of Edmonds, Edmonds Senior Center, Washington State Ferry

Terminal, Sound Transit and Community Transit Commuter Rail and Bus Station, City beaches and parks, including a nationally recognized 27-acre underwater dive park; and

WHEREAS, in Edmonds, Dayton and Main Streets/SR/104, critical arterial streets used to access the City's waterfront, intersect with an existing BNSF rail line and in the near future, two BNSF rail lines at grade, and these at-grade rail crossings slow the movement of people and goods between downtown Edmonds and the City's waterfront, thus creating mobility and safety hazards; and

WHEREAS, the Dayton Street crossing is the primary access to the Port of Edmonds, Marina Beach Park, Olympic Beach Park, Edmonds Senior Center, restaurants, businesses, residential units, etc., and the Main Street/SR104 crossing serves as the access and exit corridor for the Washington State Ferry Terminal, 27-acre Underwater Dive Park, Edmonds Senior Center, restaurants, businesses, residential units, etc.; and

WHEREAS, under existing conditions and without the additional train traffic proposed by the GPT project, loading and unloading of vehicles at the Washington State Ferry Terminal are routinely disrupted by existing trains moving along the mainline railroad tracks and such vehicles must cross existing/future BNSF rail line(s), the only at grade crossing in the Washington State Ferry System, and the addition of nine to eighteen coal related trains per day will increase the disruption of loading and unloading of vehicles at the Washington State Ferry Terminal; and

WHEREAS, due to reduced train speeds through the City of Edmonds and the need to lower approach warning crossing barriers at Main and Dayton Streets simultaneously due to their close proximity, rail crossing barriers for each train at each controlled crossing would need to be down for approximately 6-8 minutes for 1.5 mile long freight trains; and

WHEREAS, with the number of all trains per day expected to increase from the current 40 (weekday average) to as many as 70 by 2020 and 104 in 2030, the City is concerned that increased rail traffic generated from the Gateway Pacific Terminal project has the potential to adversely affect local environment and economy of Edmonds in the following ways:

- Effective emergency response times could be threatened if response times for police and fire are interrupted more frequently, and for longer periods of time, due to the length of each train
- Reductions in overall system mobility, i.e., pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, buses, freight, etc.

- Increased risk of accidents (due to increased train traffic through pedestrian and vehicular intersections)
- A significant increase in coal train traffic will more frequently delay general commerce, commuters, and other vehicular traffic, thus impacting economic sustainability, e.g., impediments to Washington State Ferries operations and freight mobility, decreased tourism and waterfront activities due to congestion, noise, blockage, etc.,
- Delays in existing commuter and passenger train service due to lack of double tracks through Edmonds
- Air and water quality and attendant health impacts due to fugitive coal dust from trains and increased diesel exhaust from the four engines needed to operate each coal train; and the impact of which on the health of Edmonds residents and visitors is yet to be determined; and

NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EDMONDS, WASHINGTON, HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. We ask that the potential impacts to Edmonds' public health, safety, economy, traffic, and environment be studied by the agencies conducting the environmental review and request that Edmonds be included in any EIS hearing schedule pertaining to any project in the Northwest that may cause significant increases in associated rail traffic traveling via Edmonds.

Section 2. We urge the United States Corps of Engineers, Washington Department of Ecology, and Whatcom County Council to hold at least one of the environmental impact statement scoping hearings in Edmonds and to conduct thorough studies which identify and measure the major impacts to the City of Edmonds that would result from a significant increase in coal train traffic, and that said agencies include the impacts of the proposed increase in rail traffic and those referenced in this Resolution in the scope of the EIS and public hearings at the various stages of the EIS process.

Section 3. The City of Edmonds hereby urges Whatcom County, Washington Department of Ecology, and United States Corp of Engineers to fully study impacts to Edmonds, including but not limited to increased traffic congestion and delays to residents and commerce (including Washington State Ferries operations), potential impacts from coal dust and other particulates, noise, mobility, etc., in the scoping of the EIS for the GPT project,

and that adverse impacts are fully mitigated.

Section 4. That the City of Edmonds requests that the railroad provide representatives to meet periodically with local citizen groups and local government officials from Edmonds to seek mutually acceptable ways to address local concerns.

Section 5. That the City of Edmonds requests that SSA Marine and BNSF identify any improvement plans related to grading, widening, or otherwise providing crossings at intersections that would be necessary to address/mitigate impacts caused by increases in rail traffic and require that SSA and BNSF mitigate impacts by funding the design and construction of these upgrades.

Section 6. That Washington State Department Transportation, Washington Utilities and Trade Commission, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, City of Edmonds, etc., study the issue of capacity and the threshold at which point train operations essentially render connectivity between the City's downtown and Waterfront, SR104/Main Street and Washington State Ferry Terminal ineffective/inefficient/nonfunctional, and that the City's Waterfront ceases to be a place that is easily accessible and can be enjoyed by businesses, restaurants, visitors, tourists, residents, etc.

Section 7. That the City of Edmonds be made a Party of Record for all aspects of the environmental and permitting phases of the GPT project.

RESOLVED this 17th day of July, 2012

APPROVED:


MAYOR, DAVID O. EARLING

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATED:


CITY CLERK, SANDRA S. CHASE

FILED WITH THE CITY CLERK: 07-13-2012
PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL: 07-17-2012
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