



Dear Mayor Schaaf and Members of the Oakland City Council,

Those of us coordinating the effort to prevent coal transport by rail through Oakland are writing to respond to the August 5, 2015 letter to you from Rome Aloise on behalf of the Teamsters Joint Council No. 7. We want to share some of our thoughts with you and with Mr. Aloise.

Mr. Aloise writes, "We will never accuse any organization or individual who opposes coal shipments of being against good jobs for Oakland." We do support good jobs for Oakland. Indeed, we support the construction of the bulk export terminal and the other developments at the former Army Base. As Mr. Aloise pointed out, many of us worked on and/or supported the Project Labor Agreement and community benefits agreement. Our concern is to prevent the negative environmental consequences of shipping coal that threaten our workers, communities and climate.

The number of jobs created by the terminal will be approximately the same whatever commodities are shipped. Ruling out one dangerous commodity will not eliminate construction or permanent jobs. When the City Council approved the project, coal was not needed to make the project viable and nothing has changed that would make it necessary now. In fact, in the past two years, the market for coal exports has slumped. At this time, building infrastructure for coal exports seems increasingly risky as a strategy for bringing jobs to Oakland.

Mr. Aloise identifies the underlying issue of climate change, which is the major challenge of our time. Replacing carbon-based energy sources with sustainable alternatives will require a massive technological and social transformation that inevitably will affect many jobs. We would like to see the labor and environmental movements collaborating to come up with creative solutions to meet this unprecedented challenge. Fortunately, the question of shipping coal through Oakland can be resolved in a way that protects the environment while preserving current and anticipated jobs.

We appreciate the proposals for mitigation that Mr. Aloise describes. However, we do not share his optimism about the covered coal cars the developers refer to. As he points out, the use of surfactants reduces dust, but does not eliminate this toxic leakage. Our extensive research, including contact with many railroad employees, has not indicated that any covered coal cars are currently in use. If they can be built, they will be prohibitively expensive. And, as the evidence and facts we will present at the September 21 Public Hearing before the City Council will show, this untested technology has a significant and very scary flaw: the likelihood that coal will combust in covered cars. We do not want the residents of Oakland to be the guinea pigs if this occurs.

As you all are well aware, in 2013 Phil Tagami publicly assured the City that he had no intention of shipping coal through the terminal he is developing. The fact that he has changed his mind about this leads us to distrust his assurances that he will put in place mitigation measures such as covered coal cars. Moreover, this is an unenforceable promise by Mr. Tagami. No law requires coal cars to be covered. And there is no contract between the developer and the City to enforce this promise.

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The coalition opposing coal shipment is not threatening to kill the development or block the funding of the dry bulk terminal, only to restrict the commodities that could be transported, that is, by eliminating coal. We believe this terminal is viable without coal as one of its commodities. The developers may respond that they cannot build the project without the funding from Utah. However, the \$53 million from Utah would only be only a small fraction of the money to complete the \$1.2 billion build-out of Oakland's new maritime facility. And many other possible sources of funding would be jeopardized if there is an agreement with Utah to ship coal. Other financing options (such as Alameda County Transportation Commission funds) are linked to environmental goals regarding pollution and climate change. These are potentially sources of more than the \$53 million from Utah.

Mr. Aloise refers to the "long, open, transparent process and ample negotiation" that led to the agreements regarding the new development. However, Mr. Tagami's about-face about shipping coal undermined that process. We did not learn about his reversal from a transparent communication from him. When we found out about this in April, we understood that a contract with the Utah entities would be signed by the end of June, which fortunately was not the case. However, the time constraint we believed we were under negatively affected our process of communicating with stakeholders.

We are looking forward to the public hearing on September 21 as an opportunity for all perspectives to be heard. In the meanwhile, we are reaching out to many stakeholders and hope to be talking directly with Mr. Aloise in the near future.

Sincerely,

Coal Free Oakland Campaign  
Communities for a Better Environment  
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice  
Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter  
Sunflower Alliance  
West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project  
West Oakland Neighbors

Cc: Senator Barbara Boxer  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Congresswoman Barbara Lee  
Governor Jerry Brown  
Senator Loni Hancock  
Assemblymember Rob Bonta  
Assemblymember Tony Thurmond  
Supervisor Keith Carson  
Supervisor Wilma Chan  
Supervisor Nate Miley  
Art Dao, Alameda County Transportation Commission  
Alameda County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
Marty Frates, Teamsters Local 70  
Chris Lytle, Port of Oakland  
Revive Oakland Coalition