

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Action: Resolution 5065 to Oppose the Transport of Coal for Export through Eugene

Meeting Date: July 9, 2012
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: 8
Contact Telephone Number: 541-682-5882

ISSUE STATEMENT

This is an opportunity for the City Council to consider and take action on a resolution opposing the transport of coal for export through Eugene.

BACKGROUND

Support for council action on this resolution was expressed during public testimony at City Council meetings and in email communications.

Councilor Zelenka has requested that this item be brought to the council for consideration.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

None.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

The council may adopt the resolution, modify the resolution, or decline to adopt the resolution.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager has no recommendation on this item.

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move to adopt Resolution 5065 to oppose the transport of coal for export through Eugene.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Proposed Resolution

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Staff Contact: Beth Forrest
Telephone: 541-682-5882
Staff E-Mail: beth.l.forrest@ci.eugene.or.us

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE THE TRANSPORT OF COAL FOR EXPORT THROUGH EUGENE.

The City Council of the City of Eugene finds that:

A. In October 2011, the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay (the “Port”) signed an exclusive negotiating agreement with an anonymous company interested in shipping coal from the Port. The proposal, called Project Mainstay, would build a new terminal and ship 6-10 million tons of coal per year.

B. This coal would originate in Wyoming and Montana and would be shipped to Asia. The Port of Coos Bay indicated that as many as 10 trains with 120 to 135 cars that are 1.5 miles long could pass through Eugene per week. At 10 to 15 mile per hour these trains could block intersections in Eugene for 5 minutes. This would increase traffic and the risk of delaying emergency vehicles at rail crossings.

C. According to findings from the Environmental Protection Agency and research in other communities; there are likely to be significant negative impacts to Eugene’s public health, economy, and air and water quality.

D. These mile and half long trains which typically carrying 100 tons of coal; can lose up to 3% of their load in transit in coal dust. The train cars are not likely to be covered due to danger of fires, and nor are they likely to be sealed with a surfactant to prevent the coal dust loss en route because of the additional cost of applying the surfactant.

E. This coal dust will have a negative impact on local businesses, farms, homes and crops. Property values along coal transport routes have also been shown to decline. As well, local food production is likely to sustain adverse impacts which are counter to our community’s desire to increase local healthy food production.

F. Coal dust contains toxic heavy metals, including mercury, arsenic, and lead; all known to have serious adverse health impacts on people of all ages, particularly children. These heavy metals, as well as emissions from the diesel-powered engines, are linked to increases in cancer, bronchitis, emphysema, black lung disease and birth defects. The train tracks through Eugene go directly through neighborhoods with populations that already face adverse health impacts.

G. Mercury and other toxic air pollutants produced from burning the coal in Asian nations have been shown to adversely impact the Northwest’s air, water, fish, and wildlife.

H. Exporting to, and burning coal in, Asia for electricity production will increase greenhouse gases (GHG) and hasten the adverse effects of global warming. Exporting coal to Asia will extend the period of time that Asian nations are reliant on coal, resulting in greater

worldwide GHG emissions and other air pollution. It is difficult to see how exporting coal fits into the larger strategy of moving to a lower carbon future.

I. The City of Eugene is a leader in the fight for clean air, and against climate change, by signing on to the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, creating our award-winning Community Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP), and by establishing Council goals to become carbon neutral in City-owned facilities and operations by 2020, and to reduce community-wide fossil fuel use by 50% by 2030.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EUGENE, a Municipal Corporation of the State of Oregon, as follows:

Section 1. While we strongly support the use of rail on the Coos Bay Rail Link for freight, and the resulting jobs at the Port of Coos Bay; we find that coal trains through our City will have adverse social, economic, and environmental consequences for Eugene without much, if any, economic benefit to our community. Allowing coal trains to pass through our City is not compatible with the City's efforts to improve air quality, enhance public health, and promote local food production.

Section 2. Exporting coal to Asia for electricity production is inconsistent with Eugene's efforts to reduce GHG emissions that cause climate change, move toward a lower carbon future, and to create clean energy jobs.

Section 3. The City of Eugene shall explore whether there are local, state or federal laws protecting public health, safety, and air and water quality that can be used to prevent the transport of coal through the City, and if so, take reasonable steps to prevent that transport.

Section 4. We fully support Governor Kitzhaber's request that a federal agency prepare a programmatic and comprehensive environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act to look at the unprecedented number of coal export proposals pending in the Pacific Northwest, as well as the potential effects in this country of the use of coal in Asia. Now is the time for a programmatic EIS, before substantial and irreversible commitments of resources are made.

Section 5. This resolution shall be sent to Governor Kitzhaber, Senators Wyden and Merkley, Congressman DeFazio, Secretary of the Interior Salazar, Secretary of the Army McHugh, General Temple of the US Army Corp of Engineers, Director Abbey of the Bureau of Land Management, our local state legislative delegation; and the City shall lobby on its behalf where appropriate.

Section 6. This Resolution is effective immediately upon its passage by the City Council.

The foregoing Resolution adopted on the ____ day of _____, 2012.