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Tue, 05 Aug 2008 20:35

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OAKLAND: PORT COMMISSIONERS APPROVE TRUCK RETROFITTING PROGRAM

OAKLAND (BCN)

Port of Oakland commissioners voted 5-0 tonight, with two members absent, to grant \$5 million to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to help retrofit 1,000 trucks with new filters in a bid to reduce air pollution in West Oakland.

Air Quality Management District Executive Officer Jack Broadbent said after the vote that a total of \$15 million will be spent on the retrofitting program, as his agency will contribute \$5 million and another \$5 million will come from an infrastructure bond approved by California voters in 2006.

Broadbent told commissioners he believes retrofitting trucks that use the Port of Oakland "will make a serious dent in improvng public health in West Oakland."

He said the cancer risk in West Oakland due to diesel fumes emitted by trucks that use the Port of Oakland is two to three time higher than in the rest of the Bay Area.

The program is aimed at drayage trucks, which are diesel-fueled, heavy-duty trucks that transport containers and bulk goods to and from ports and intermodal rail yards to other locations.

In a related matter, Port commissioners also voted 5-0, with two members absent, to hire a consultant to study the costs and impacts of having a new labor model for trucking companies that do business at the Port.

The study by Beacon Economics of Los Angeles will look at the possibility of requiring trucking companies to hire drivers inste ad of using them as independent contractors, which is their current business model.

On July 22, Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and others spoke at a rally attended by about 300 truck drivers, union members, public health advocates and environmentalists to urge the Port to approve such a requirement. Los Angeles recently implemented that requirement.

Linda Stahl of Impact Transportation of Richmond told Port commissioners tonight that she's "very concerned about your education level on drayage trucking and clean air issues."

Stahl said the long line of trucks that idle outside Port of Oakland terminals isn't caused by trucking companies but instead i s caused by disputes between steamship lines and organized labor.

She said, "Truckers just want to do their jobs."

After the July 22 rally in Oakland, Clayton Boyce of the American Trucking Association said his organization supports some of Los Angeles' plan to make the trucking industry cleaner but will file a lawsuit to oppose the requirement to have drivers hired as employees.

Boyce said the association would also sue the Port of Oakland if it approves such a requirement.

Boyce said the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state and local governments cannot enact laws governing the price, route or service of truckers.

Port of Oakland spokeswoman Marilyn Sandifur said tonight that the study by Beacon Economics will take about three months and commissioners won't make any decisions until after it's completed.

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