



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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November 21, 2011

(See Distribution List)

RE: Gateway Pacific Terminal Project

Dear Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for your letter of November 3, 2011, regarding the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point. I understand the widespread and high level of public interest and concern about the extent of the environmental analysis and review for this project.

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and Whatcom County are preparing to conduct a thorough analysis of the proposal and related environmental impacts under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). SEPA requires identification and study of significant impacts: direct, indirect and cumulative. In analyzing impacts under SEPA, agencies do not limit their consideration to only those impacts within the project's immediate vicinity or within each agency's respective jurisdiction. Rather, SEPA requires consideration of impacts caused by a proposal regardless of where those impacts occur. As Ecology previously stated in our response to Whatcom County's request to be SEPA co-lead, we believe there are regional and statewide issues that should be disclosed and addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Although we do not consider the statewide rail traffic to be part of the 'proposal' itself, increased rail traffic will be a likely impact caused by the proposal. Thus, we expect that the environmental review will include an analysis of increased rail transportation to determine the effects on many of the environmental elements specified in SEPA, such as air quality, noise, transportation systems, vehicular traffic, rail traffic, public safety, traffic hazards, and more.

The full scope of any rail impacts analysis, including geographic scope, will be determined through the public scoping process, which is the first step in SEPA review. Public scoping will involve public meetings to obtain comments and input from citizens, community groups, other agencies, affected jurisdictions, and tribes on what topics and potential impacts to include in the environmental studies for the project. Public involvement is an important part of the process, and the public's comments will help to guide the agencies in making scoping decisions. A consultant team will be assisting us to organize public meetings and amass and compile what we expect will be a large volume of comments. Then the scope of the environmental review will be determined after taking into consideration the public comment and consulting with other state agencies with expertise in the various subject areas.

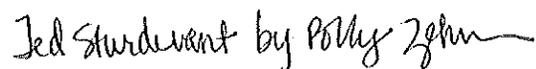


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Decisions made during the scoping process will provide the foundation for a thorough and complete environmental review that will, in turn, provide a factual basis that state and local officials can use when making future land use and permit decisions.

If you have any questions about the project or the SEPA process, please do not hesitate to contact Jeannie Summerhays, Director, Northwest Regional Office, at jeannie.summerhays@ecy.wa.gov / 425-649-7010.

Sincerely,



Ted Sturdevant
Director

cc: Pete Kremen, County Executive, Whatcom County

Distribution List –
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