



KING COUNTY
Signature Report

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

December 17, 2013

Motion 14038

Proposed No. 2013-0386.3

Sponsors Phillips

1 A MOTION expressing deep concern about the serious
2 potential impacts of new coal terminals in Oregon and
3 Washington and urging a comprehensive environmental
4 review of the impacts of proposals for new terminals,
5 including the associated transport and burning of coal.

6 WHEREAS, mounting evidence demonstrates the negative human health impacts
7 of coal mining, processing, transporting and combustion, and

8 WHEREAS, the burning of coal produces the highest greenhouse gas content of
9 any fuel and accelerates climate deterioration, and

10 WHEREAS, the state of Washington officially recognizes the negative economic,
11 public health, and environmental impacts of climate change on this state, in both chapter
12 80.80 RCW and Executive Order No. 0905, and

13 WHEREAS, because of these environmental and health risks, Washington state is
14 taking steps toward reducing American dependence on coal-fired power, including the
15 2011 passage of the TransAlta Energy Transition Bill, Chapter 180, Laws of Washington
16 2011, making possible the retirement of the state's last coal-fired power plant by 2025,
17 and

18 WHEREAS, there are currently proposals to significantly expand the production
19 of coal on federal lands in the Powder River basin, straddling Wyoming and Montana, for
20 export to Asian economies and

21 WHEREAS, the federal government has not done a comprehensive review of the
22 environmental impact of proposed coal leases of federal lands or analysis of the fair
23 market value the federal government should receive from coal extraction on federal
24 lands, and

25 WHEREAS, the economic viability of expanded coal production in the Powder
26 River basin largely depends on the export of coal by rail through the Pacific Northwest,
27 and

28 WHEREAS, there are currently three proposed coal export terminals in the
29 Pacific Northwest of the United States: the Gateway Pacific terminal north of
30 Bellingham, Washington; the Millennium Bulk Terminals in Longview, Washington; and
31 the Morrow Pacific Terminal in Boardman, Oregon, and

32 WHEREAS, the operation of the proposed coal export terminals at expected
33 capacity would nearly double the amount of coal exported by the United States, and

34 WHEREAS, building new coal export terminals in Washington and Oregon will
35 cause significant impacts on air, water, public health, climate pollution and transportation
36 and

37 WHEREAS, coal is commonly transported via open-top rail cars that allow the
38 spread of coal dust and chunks of coal as well as increased diesel emissions, and

39 WHEREAS, it is anticipated that new coal export terminals in Western
40 Washington will result in an increase in coal train traffic of at least eighteen additional

41 loaded and unloaded coal trains per day, each approximately one and one-half miles long,
42 through King County including the cities of Seattle, Auburn, Kent, Renton and
43 Skykomish, which could impact the capacity for future passenger rail, and resulting in
44 significant delays of between one to three hours per day at at-grade crossings in King
45 County, increasing traffic congestion and causing delays for cars and buses, and

46 WHEREAS, adverse public health impacts from building new terminals in
47 Washington and Oregon could include: impaired respiratory functions resulting from
48 diesel particulate matter associated with increased train traffic and coal dust; exposure to
49 mercury and other heavy metal pollution from open pit coal trains; noise exposure along
50 the train route; and increased frequency of long trains at rail crossings, with the potential
51 to delay emergency medical response times and increase vehicle-train accidents, and

52 WHEREAS, the adverse water quality impacts from building new terminals in
53 Washington and Oregon could include degradation to the aquatic environment adjacent
54 to the terminals as well as the impacts of coal and dust emissions and associated mercury
55 and heavy metal pollution on water quality, habitat and listed species along the rail
56 corridor route, and

57 WHEREAS, the significant increase in coal trains could result in significant
58 negative impacts to our local economy, mainly through delays in both current and future
59 freight and passenger traffic. In King County, key industries like aerospace, container
60 shippers, agriculture and shippers rely on the rail corridor to move parts, commodities
61 and finished products and adding coal rail traffic of this magnitude could impact this
62 commerce, and

63 WHEREAS, a recent property valuation report concluded the proposed increase
64 in coal trains could result in significant diminution in property value in areas near or
65 adjacent to the rail tracks, and

66 WHEREAS, many of the areas closest to the rail lines in King County where coal
67 train traffic to the proposed coal export terminals would travel include high percentage of
68 minority and low-income populations, who will be disproportionately affected by impacts
69 from these proposals, including traffic, air pollution, health risks and noise, and

70 WHEREAS, the new coal proposals would directly support a huge quantity of
71 coal burning in China and other Asian countries. Burning the coal associated with these
72 proposals would result in more than two hundred million metric tons of carbon dioxide
73 equivalent greenhouse gas emissions annually, roughly equivalent to twice of all
74 emissions produced in Washington state, and

75 WHEREAS, burning coal releases mercury into the environment which then
76 enters the food chain. Mercury exposure is associated with impaired development in
77 fetuses, infants and children. Asian coal burning contributes to about ten percent of the
78 mercury currently deposited in the United States, and

79 WHEREAS, many cities, tribes and organizations have expressed their opposition
80 or strong concerns relating to new coal terminals in Washington and Oregon, including:
81 the cities of Seattle, Shoreline, Edmonds, Marysville, Snohomish, Mount Vernon,
82 Snohomish, Washougal, Camas, Vancouver and Olympia, Washington; the cities of
83 Portland and Eugene, Oregon; the Lummi Nation, Tulalip Tribes and Yakama Nation;
84 Climate Solutions, Washington Environmental Council, the Sierra Club, National
85 Wildlife Federation and more than one hundred environmental and community

86 organizations; the Kent and Burlington Chambers of Commerce; the Ports of Skagit and
87 Skamania; the Chinatown/International District Business Association; First & Goal; and
88 and the Seattle Art Museum, and

89 WHEREAS, on July 31, 2013, the Washington state Department of Ecology
90 announced that the scope of environmental review of the Gateway Pacific terminal north
91 of Bellingham will be broad and include an analysis of greenhouse gas emissions of the
92 end use of the transported coal, a statewide assessment of the impact of added train traffic
93 to serve the Gateway Pacific coal terminal, an assessment of cargo ship operations
94 beyond Washington waters, an assessment of how the project would affect human health
95 and an examination of the impact of additional shipping on whales and other marine
96 animals in the Salish sea and its islands, and

97 WHEREAS, the scoping period for the environmental review for a proposed coal
98 export terminal near Longview, Washington, is from August 16, 2013, to November 18,
99 2013. During that period, comments to assist in a decision of what impacts to analyze in
100 an environmental impact statement will be gathered, and

101 WHEREAS, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has not committed to a
102 conducting a comprehensive environmental impact statement of the proposed coal export
103 terminal near Boardman, Oregon, and has instead reported it will conduct a more limited
104 review referred to an environmental assessment, which is typically much briefer and
105 offers few opportunities for public comment than an environmental impact statement, and

106 WHEREAS, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has not committed to
107 addressing the area-wide cumulative impacts analysis related to these three proposals,
108 and

109 WHEREAS, King County has been a national leader in addressing climate change
110 including reducing greenhouse gas emission from its operations, generating renewable
111 energy, collaborating with other local governments reduce greenhouse gas in the region,
112 promoting clean jobs and demonstrating clean energy technologies that promote
113 sustainable global economic development, and

114 WHEREAS, King County's Strategic Pan establishes the county's core goals of
115 protecting public health, safeguarding water and air quality, reducing climate pollution,
116 meeting the growing need for transportation services and facilities, and supporting a
117 strong and diverse sustainable economy;

118 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

119 A. The council is deeply concerned about the serious potential impacts of new
120 coal export terminals in Washington and Oregon on transportation, public health, climate
121 pollution, water and air quality, marine animals in the Salish sea and its islands and
122 minority and low-income populations.

123 B. The council recognizes the importance of the region's railway network as a
124 foundational element of King County's manufacturing and shipping economy, as well as
125 an environmentally responsible means of moving passengers and high-value freight.

126 C. The council commends the Washington state Department of Ecology and
127 Whatcom county for their recent decision to conduct a broad environmental review of the
128 proposed Gateway Pacific coal terminal, including an analysis of greenhouse gas
129 emissions of the end use of the transported coal, a statewide assessment of the impact of
130 added train traffic to serve the Gateway Pacific coal terminal, an assessment of cargo ship
131 operations beyond Washington state waters, an assessment of how the project would

132 affect human health and an examination of the impact of additional shipping on whales
133 and other marine animals in the Salish sea and its islands.

134 D. The council urges state and federal agencies to conduct a full environmental
135 review of the Millennium Bulk coal terminal proposed in Longview, Washington, using
136 the same broad approach as has been proposed by the state of Washington for the
137 Gateway Pacific coal terminal north of Bellingham. The environmental review should
138 include an analysis of all impacts, mitigation options and costs, including all those
139 impacts directly or indirectly affecting King County and local jurisdictions within King
140 County.

141 E. The council affirms its support for stronger federal standards to protect public
142 health and the environment by limiting the amount of greenhouse gas pollution.

143 F. The council urges state and federal agencies to conduct a full environmental
144 review of all proposed coal terminals in Washington and Oregon using the same broad
145 approach as has been proposed by the state of Washington for the Gateway Pacific coal
146 terminal north of Bellingham. The environmental review of all proposed coal terminals
147 should include an analysis of all impacts, mitigation options and costs, including all those
148 impacts directly or indirectly affecting King County and local jurisdictions within King
149 County.

150 G. The council hereby expresses its intent to include in its federal legislative
151 agenda a request to the United States Department of the Interior to examine new and
152 expanded coal leases in the Powder River basin including a review of federal coal leasing
153 practices including an analysis of appropriate pricing for coal leases and a comprehensive

154 review of the greenhouse gas and other air quality effects of continued and expanded coal
155 leasing.
156

Motion 14038 was introduced on 8/26/2013 and passed as amended by the Metropolitan King County Council on 12/16/2013, by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Mr. Phillips, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Patterson,
Ms. Lambert, Mr. Dunn, Mr. McDermott and Mr. Dembowski
No: 0
Excused: 1 - Ms. Hague

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Larry Gossett, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Attachments: None