

## **Public Comment Agenda Item No. 37**

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

**July 3, 2024  
10:00 a.m.**

#### **Location**

San Bernardino County Transportation Authority  
First Floor Lobby Board Room  
1170 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, San Bernardino, CA 92410

#### **TELECONFERENCING WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION:**

Big Bear Lake Civic Center  
Training Room  
39707 Big Bear Boulevard  
Big Bear Lake, CA 92315

#### **Public Comment**

*Written public comments were received after the posting of the agenda and are being provided as support material.*

Dear Chair Marquez and Board Members,

My name is Melanie Robles, and I am an 18 years old community member. As a lifelong resident of San Bernardino County and a member of the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, I urgently want to address Agenda Item 37. Having reviewed the information related to the support of HR-7650, I strongly oppose this proposal and urge you to reject the recommendation to support House Resolution-7650.

I am against HR-7650 because it adds a measure where "economic feasibility" is a standard for whether or not an economic regulation can be implemented. This measure allows megacorporations to claim that any transition to sustainable zero-emission technology is "infeasible" if the transition is expensive. However, if corporations continue to not absorb this price, it will continue to be paid by community members like myself, whose lungs can no longer take it. These corporations and their profit should not be prioritized over the people who live in this region and are affected everyday. Alternatives for our pollutant sources exist, and this measure of economic feasibility needs to be removed.

Living in an area with some of the highest PM2.5, ozone, and pollution levels in the country has had a profound impact on my life. I remember being unable to go out for recess in elementary school on some days due to the severe air pollution. My sister, who suffers from respiratory issues including asthma, visits the hospital weekly. This is a reality for many in our community. My family's health is on the line. It's time to put an end to this pattern of prioritizing profit over people.

The plan would also stagnate progress on emission reductions, as agencies would be legally allowed to shift the accountability for emissions by blaming "sources out of their control," such as federal sources. While I understand that local agencies are not 100% responsible for emissions, this measure will again open a loophole for agencies not to be held accountable for their irresponsible decisions. I would also like to call to attention that this measure would decrease the review frequency for the EPA from five years to 10 years. By nearly doubling this periodic review period, this measure places communities who need rapid action to continue to be unheard and unsupported.

Therefore, I strongly oppose the staff's recommendation to support HR-7650 and urge you not to support this measure. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melanie Robles

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE  
“Bringing People Together to Improve Our Social and Natural Environment”

July 2, 2024

San Bernardino County Transportation Authority  
Attn: Board of Directors  
1170 W. 3rd Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92410  
*Submitted via email to [clerkoftheboard@gosbcta.com](mailto:clerkoftheboard@gosbcta.com).*

**Re: July 3, 2024 Board Agenda Item #37: Legislative Recommendations to Support House Resolution 7650 - CCAEJ Oppose**

Dear Chair Marquez and SBCTA board members,

On behalf of the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAIEJ), I am writing regarding Item 37: Legislative Recommendation to Support House Resolution 7650 which is on the agenda for the July 3, 2024 board meeting. After reviewing the Item and its supporting material, we are **opposed** to that recommendation and do not believe that it is a stance which SBCTA should take.

As a region which continues to rank as having some of the worst air quality in the nation and where one of the most polluting rail yards in the state is located, the Clean Air Act (CAA) is absolutely vital to protecting communities like ours and ensuring that we have a fighting chance at living, despite the many hardships imposed by decades of disinvestment and being overlooked. Thus, it is extremely concerning to see that SBCTA is being recommended to support a bill which would substantially weaken the CAA and undermine local efforts to clean up the air in our region. Though SBCTA is not in charge of air quality in the region, several SBCTA board members also are members of the various air quality management districts in the region which *do* have that responsibility, making it that much more baffling as to why this sort of recommendation would be brought forward.

Another issue is that the supporting documentation for Item 37 makes a number of incorrect or completely outlandish claims regarding the feasibility of implementing the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) In-Use Locomotive Rule. As passed, the rule would not go into full effect until at least 2035 and would then only apply to *new* locomotives. Existing diesel locomotives would still be allowed to operate for many more decades after that. Furthermore, that date is more than a decade away and the Rule contains technology review periods which might result in further delay if deemed to be necessary at those times.

However, it is truly baffling to see the assertion that “existing rail technologies, as well as those for the foreseeable future” cannot meet a requirement for operation of technology which SBCTA proudly displays on its own website and social media. In addition to the novelty of hydrogen-powered trains, CARB has funded investments into battery-powered trains which have served Barstow and other State funding commitments continue to be made to other technologies elsewhere around the state and a recent CARB study has demonstrated the feasibility of zero-emissions technologies to travel from the San Pedro Bay Ports to Barstow. Furthermore, both Metrolink and SCAG have commissioned studies on providing zero-emissions operation in the Southern California region via the proven path of catenary, demonstrating that it was already technically feasible at least three decades ago. (And if those studies had been acted on, we would have achieved that outcome by now for many years.) In recent years, India has electrified their rail network, including freight, and expects to achieve 100% by the end of this year. Thus, the canard about infeasibility of meeting a requirement for new locomotives a decade from now is wholly unjustified.

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Finally, the concern of the loss of highway funding due to nonattainment highlights an overreliance of SBCTA transportation planning and ballot measure funding allocation on roads. While it is understandable that no local agency is interested in losing out on funding from other partners, the small percentage of funds not dedicated to some level of roads really lays bare the impact of the lack of having a healthy level of investment into alternatives. If highway funds were to be cut, it would cut nearly all funds and the paltry amounts dedicated to other modes could not come close to filling the gap. We urge SBCTA to reconsider their planning and funding strategies and raise the priority of projects which not only stand a better chance of surviving potential funding cuts, but which would fill critical gaps in safety and physical infrastructure shortcomings which exist all throughout the county.

Thus, in consideration of these factors, we again recommend against supporting this Item and instead take the interests of community over those of some of the biggest and most moneyed actors in the country.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Marven E. Norman, MPA  
Policy Coordinator

*CCA EJ* is a long-standing community based organization with over 40 years of experience advocating for stronger regulations through strategic campaigns and building a base of community power. Most notably, *CCA EJ*'s founder Penny Newman won a landmark federal case against Stringfellow Construction which resulted in the 'Stringfellow Acid Pits' being declared one of the first Superfund sites in the nation. *CCA EJ* prioritizes community voices as we continue our grassroots efforts to bring lasting environmental justice to the Inland Valley Region.



CCA EJ

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