

NorthEast L.A. Residents For Clean Air

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December 27, 2013

Michael P. Depallo, Chief Executive Officer
Southern California Regional Authority
One Gateway Plaza, Floor 12
Los Angeles, California 90012

Subject: Metrolink Central Maintenance Facility Health Risk Assessment

Dear Mr. DePallo:

We have studied the proposed Metrolink HRA in detail. Mr. Bill Piazza, Environmental Assessment Coordinator of LAUSD, assisted us in some technical matters and we are in full agreement with the technical recommendations put forward by Mr. Piazza in his letter. Instead of repeating his more technical comments, we make our comments from the perspective of community level experiences.

It is important to remember that community members' first hand experiences are significant. For consensus to emerge from this process, the HRA must inspire the trust and confidence of the local community. Our comments focus on sharing the community's attempts to verify and understand the assumptions of the HRA. We also raise questions about process and communication. Though these comments stray from talking only and technically about the HRA per se we believe that they are important in order for the study to result in consensus.

Community Concerns about Baseline Emission Assumptions

In order to assess the accuracy of emissions baselines of the proposed HRA, the community has attempted to understand the operational procedures of the CMF. (Number of trains, hours of operation, hours of HEP engine running.) We note numerous and ongoing exceptions to the verbally stated "operational procedures." For instance, we have been told that trains will use their HEP engines for approximately 45 minutes for Federally Mandated Inspections. Yet, on Holidays such as on Labor and Memorial day 2013 single trains idled for nearly 13 hours without any employee attending to it or performing any maintenance. On several other occasions, community members have noted long running trains, loud train idling, off hour's maintenance, and late night load tests. When community members have inquired about such incidents we have been told that they are "exceptions." The pattern leads us to conclude that "the exception is the rule."

When community members have raised operational exceptions to Metrolink's designated public contact, we're told that the issue will be "brought to the attention of the contractor," leading us to understand that CMF is operated by maintenance sub-contractors. These exception situations have lead us to ask if a logging system is in place to register exceptions or if Metrolink is depending on community members for this. We have specifically asked whether Metrolink can provide logs of HEP

engine use, which is a matter of utmost concern to the community given the levels of sound and air pollution attributed to an idling engine. Apparently, no automated or manual logging of HEP operations is in place.

Given the repeated exceptions to the stated rules of operation, a lack of logging systems, and apparent sub-contractor management issues, how can community members have confidence in the estimates of the HRA? Related, if the HRA results in recommendations to change operational procedures how can we have confidence in Metrolink's ability to manage its sub-contractors to enact these changes?

Community Concerns about Whether HRA Truly Assesses Health Impacts

We also wish to note that as lay people and community members we did not at the outset exactly understand the specific limits of an HRA emissions study. Some key issues that we perceive as affecting health are apparently not included.

First, as Mr. Piazza has noted in his response, the proposed protocol deals exclusively with long term risks focused on a statistical analysis related mostly to cancer. Within the community there are a range of other respiratory health impacts that concern us. These include impacts on asthma both long term and incidental (especially among youth,) as well as cardio-pulmonary diseases that have been tied to diesel particulate.

Secondly, noise pollution is a real and significant impact for locals that is completely unaccounted for in the proposed HRA. As lay people many did not understand that the HRA would exclusively focus on air borne emissions but pay no attention to sound. While not at a level to produce hearing damage, many report being disturbed by the persistent train noise. As locals have taken a greater role in monitoring exception situations (such as late night trains or long idling trains) many feel an added stress. If certain operational procedures are promised but not delivered, the disturbance from sleep not only interrupts natural rhythms but it is also loaded with frustration, anxiety and even anger. Indeed, noise disturbance during sleep from variable and unpredictable noise has been linked in many studies to cardiovascular responses as well as secondary affects such as fatigue and depression.

Community Concerns about the Public Trust

Going to the matter of confidence in the study and our community's overall trust in Metrolink, we have some concerns about Metrolink's public relations efforts around the impacts of the CMF. To mention just one, Metrolink has indicated that it will work to mitigate sound impacts by use of “vegetative barriers.” While discussions of vegetative barriers sound green and promising, it is well understood in the transportation engineering community that they are ineffective. In fact, a vegetative sound barrier in the narrow space between the CMF and Elysian Valley would have virtually no impact. See: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/noise/pub/traffic_noise_attent_ground_veg.pdf , http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/noise/noise_barriers/design_construction/keepdown.cfm)

Also, community members have researched the history of the CMF and conclude that the original entitlement of the property on the basis of prior-existing facility is suspect. Metrolink's public relations documents continue to claim that its use of land was established by prior use. Yet, historical records reveal that at no time was there any train maintenance operations done at the current CMF location. Tracks did pass through this location but no building or ongoing maintenance operations were prior-

done at CMF site. Indeed the Taylor Yard train maintenance buildings were located some 9/10 of a mile upstream from the current location. By the time the land for the CMF was acquired, the parcel was already legally separated from Taylor Yard. The CMF was a Change of Use and we believe that a full environmental review was called for but avoided. We are aware of the 1992 Memorandum of Understanding between Metrolink and the City of Los Angeles that addresses some of the land use issues. We are also aware and concerned that the promises made by Metrolink in the MOU were never fully delivered.

Summary

1. We request that Metrolink respond to Mr. Piazza's critique and adopt his recommendations.
2. We request Metrolink to establish a verifiable logging system for CMF operations that includes HEP engine running so that we can have confidence in the HRA assumptions.
3. We would like to better understand how Metrolink proposes to track the work of its contractors to be certain of compliance with rules.
4. We ask that Metrolink address community concerns about noise by including noise as a separate matter of study and committing to mitigating noise to acceptable levels by proven methods.
5. We request that as a matter of good faith that Metrolink move immediately to honor all of the original terms of the MOU with the City of Los Angeles.

Sincerely,
North East Residence For Clean Air

Steven Appleton, David Delatorre, Tuyen Dinh, Ceci Dominguez, Diane Edwardson,, Karin Flores, Grove Pashley, Alisa Smith