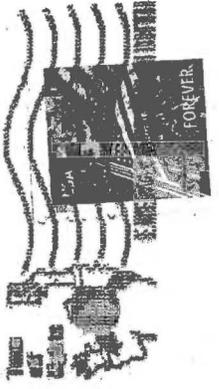


LWV Bellingham, Whatcom County  
P.O. Box 4041  
Bellingham, WA 98227

SEATTLE WA 980

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Millennium Bulk Terminals - Longview  
EYS  
% ICE International  
701 Second Avenue  
Suite 550  
Seattle, WA 98104

98104170101





# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF BELLINGHAM-WHATCOM COUNTY

## Millennium Bulk Terminal EIS Scoping Comments

### Comment 1: Health/Economic Impacts relating to Rail Coal Transportation

The League of Women Voters of Bellingham Whatcom County believes we must consider the health impacts of rail transportation of coal. We request a programmatic EIS which would study the cumulative impacts on the health of citizens from the expected increase in rail transportation of coal from the Powder River Basin to all the proposed West Coast terminals.

We support the over 200 physicians from Whatcom County who have called for studies on the health impacts from the huge amount of coal dust that will be lost from the (150 car) coal trains (full and empty) which will service these facilities, as well as the release of increased diesel particulates from at least 4 diesel engines per train. <sup>1</sup>

Burlington Northern estimates over 500 lbs. of fugitive coal dust are lost from each car as it travels from the Powder River Basin to the coast. Dust from coal and diesel engines contain toxic substances including mercury which contribute to respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema and other chronic pulmonary diseases. <sup>1</sup> Huge coal piles on site also contribute to dust and dust suppression methods are not always adequate----

<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/Unexpected+wind+gust+stirs+coal+dust+Roberts+Bank/6455530/story.html>.

We are also asking you to study the effect of noise on people's sleep, which leads to increased health problems such as depression, high blood pressure and cognitive impairment in children.

We need a cost/benefit analysis about how the train traffic will impact our air quality and our health system's ability to deal with our citizen's increased risks for serious medical problems as a result of the degradation of air quality.

Related to health costs are the delayed emergency response times that will occur when 150 car trains block vehicle crossings in the many towns that are divided by the rail tracks. How many deaths and/or serious injuries will be caused when emergency response is delayed? For instance according to a study by *Sightline Daily* (October 2013) some crossings in the Pasco area could be blocked up to 4 1/2 hours a day. If the only way to mitigate this impact is to build over passes, the costs should be borne by the proponents of the project not by individual municipalities or the state.

Currently over 900 pedestrian accidents and over 3000 collisions occur with rail crossings across the nation each year.<sup>2</sup> Please study how the addition of these super trains might increase this figure.

P.O. Box 4041, Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: (360) 734-2366

Website: [www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](http://www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org)

Email: [league@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](mailto:league@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org)

With all the proposals on the table, we are looking at 35 more trains per day (one way) carrying fossil fuels. How will our grain and other commodity shippers have rail space? They will be forced to go north to Canada or south to California<sup>3</sup> raising the price of goods and leaving us with the consequences of shipping dirty fuels



Jill Bernstein and Annette Holcomb  
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County

<sup>1</sup> Whatcom Docs position paper and appendices [coaltrainfacts.org](http://coaltrainfacts.org)

<sup>2</sup> "Heavy Traffic Ahead" Western Organization of Resource Councils July 2011

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup>  
OF BELLINGHAM-WHATCOM COUNTY**

## Millennium Bulk Terminal: EIS Scoping Comment 2: Vessel Traffic

The Salish Sea (the new "collective" name for all our inland waters from Olympia to Desolation Sound) is home to 37 mammals, 172 birds, and over 250 fish and macro-invertebrate species. Activities built around these wildlife species such as bird watching whale watching, scuba diving, recreational boating, etc. contribute \$2 MILLION a year to our economy and 21,000 jobs—second only to Boeing!

The commercial fishing industry alone provides over \$3.8 billion a year to Washington's economy and over 60,000 jobs The shell fish aquaculture t brings in another \$97 MILLION.

**Nature in the marine area provides \$10 BILLION a year to our economy** and the Puget Sound basin alone is valued as an economic asset of between \$300 BILLION and 2.6 TRILLION. (Sea Docs executive director, Joe Gaygos) This asset is threatened by the sheer volume of vessel traffic that will be generated by the three remaining proposed coal terminals and the proposals for shipping oil from the Bakken fields. The LWV of Bellingham Washington believes there must be a programmatic study of all of this vessel traffic.

Millennium alone will bring 850 Panamax-class vessels to the Salish Sea; GPT will add 900 Panamax-class ship trips. If all the proposals on the table are permitted we could see a doubling of the present tanker traffic in our fragile waters. This does not even count the huge increase in barge traffic.

Note these vessels are mostly foreign flagged and part of an aging fleet, prone to mechanical and structural failure. A breakup of just one of these vessels turbulent seas that a ship must negotiate to get to the ocean could cause a disaster to all the above industries. In August such a break up occurred off the coast of South Africa. <http://gcaptain.com/bulk-carrier-mv-smart-aground-richards-bay//>

There is no way to mitigate the costs of the destruction of our marine economy.

The LWV of Bellingham Whatcom urges you to do a comprehensive vessel traffic study with a risk/benefit analysis. This must include the cumulative impacts of all the proposed ship traffic.

  
Jill Bernstein and Annette Holcomb

Co-Presidents  
League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County

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Phone: (360) 734-2366  
Website: [www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](http://www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org)  
Email: [league@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](mailto:league@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org)