

Comments regarding HB2007

from Gregory Sotir, representing Cully Air Action Telemetry - CAAT

(cullycleanair.org)

and the Cully Association of Neighbors - CAN (www.cullyneighbors.org)

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chair Reschke, Vice Chair Schouten and Members of the Committee:

In the Cully community of NE Portland, diesel pollution is a serious nuisance and a dangerous pollutant. The Cully community is a very diverse one, including elderly homeowners and retirees, new families starting out with first homes and their first children, immigrant families fleeing war and terror, Native American and other minority populations, and working homeowners and renters. We have done a great deal, collectively, to make our community into a vibrant and protective place for residents, gardens, and animals. Many Cully residents take great pains to insure their food gardens and yards are pesticide free and organic. The same is true for neighbors who have beehives, chickens, pigs, goats and even a few alpaca. All of these are impacted by PM, soot, and diesel pollutants in ways dangerous to individual, livestock, and property health and safety.

As currently impacted, Cully sits amidst many transportation corridors, including Interstate 205, State Route 30, Columbia Highway, the UP east-west rail-line that BNSF uses, and PDX international Airport. These all combine to create a huge amount of PM, soot, and other diesel pollutants.

Cully, and adjacent local neighborhoods, also include many Title One public schools that are directly affected by PM pollutants, including Prescott St. Elementary, Helensview Alternative High School, NAYA Early College Academy, Sacajawea Head Start, and many other schools for the youth and toddlers in our communities. It is true that our neighborhood is becoming stronger and cleaner, especially now that the State and agencies are recognizing our diversity as a strength, and the fact that our community was formerly designated as a place to sacrifice environmental health and sustainability for industrial growth, but diesel pollution continues to be unaddressed and to create significant risk for all of the community and her members.

Over the last few decades we have all seen the shifting of overland transportation to include a greater amount of long-haul medium and heavy-duty trucks using diesel engines. Unfortunately, it seems our State legislators somehow forgot to insist that transportation and construction company's utilize technological upgrades for their diesel engines and insure a cleaner fuel burn/exhaust pollutant ratio. This was a technological development that Oregonians could have benefited from, especially in these current days of high health-care costs and increasing Special Education services needed in our public schools, but that we somehow missed and failed to implement. As I am sure you all aware, Oregon lags behind the other West Coast American states in providing this diesel pollutant relief to Oregon's residents. Why that happened is matter of debate, I suppose, and yet here and now is when and where we can actually rectify and correct this dangerous situation and excessive release of PM, soot, and other diesel pollutants.

HB 2007 is a welcome effort to address the dangerous health implications from excessive PM, soot, and other diesel pollutants. The state needs to incorporate standards to insure diesel operators use the Best Available Control Technology (BACT) in their engines, at least at the same level as the West Coast states. This should be immediately mandated for all company's with fleets larger than 50 medium and/or heavy-duty diesel trucks, construction companies, and mandated for smaller (less than 50) operators as quickly as possible.

Further additions to this bill in the form of Amendments should include provisions for the State to enforce a no-idling rule for trains and trucks and allow citizens to monitor and report on illegalities, as well as repealing ORS 825.615.

An Amendment to mandate that all public and private development projects, near a community larger than 10,000 people, limit diesel pollutant release to show periods of time not to exceed two hours unless occupational safety is indicated should also be included. Given the negative health effects of diesel pollution on human health, including asthma, bronchitis, reduced immune system functions, emphysema, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit (hyperactivity) Disorder (ADD/ADHD), and cancer, company's with more than 50 medium and heavy-duty diesel trucks need to maintain environmental liability insurance so that the state does not have to pay for legal issues arising from the negative medical effects of any excessive state-sponsored pollution levels in the future.

CAN, The Cully Association of Neighbors, and CAAT, Cully Air Action Telemetry urge legislators to strengthen and pass this important Bill, HB 2007, and implement the rulings as soon as possible.

CAN and CAAT are community organizations based in the Cully neighborhood NE Portland, Oregon, and reflect the needs of local residents regarding community issues.

Thank you,
Gregory Sotir

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