



EARTHJUSTICE



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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

March 19, 2025

Chair Vanessa Delgado and Members of the Mobile Source Committee
South Coast Air Quality Management District
21865 Copley Drive Diamond
Bar, CA 91765 Email:
vdelgado@aqmd.gov
Clerk of the Board, cob@aqmd.gov

Re: Item #1: The Urgent Need to Finalize the Port Indirect Source Rule (PR 2304) in 2025

Dear Chair Delgado and Members of the Mobile Source Committee:

We write to strongly urge the South Coast Air Quality Management District (District) to stay the course and finalize the Port Indirect Source Rule (PR 2304) this year. The urgency of this rule cannot be overstated: the 2022 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) recognized that achieving air quality standards requires a **67% reduction in NOx emissions** to reach attainment¹, and the ports remain the region's single largest source of NOx emissions. Even the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles recognize this urgent need, having previously set their own emission reduction target of 59% reduction in NOx by 2023. In 2023, despite container volume falling by 13%, both ports only secured half of the NOx emission reductions that they committed to.² Enforceable measures remain critical to ensure these targets are met and sustained moving forward. Last summer, Chair Delgado reaffirmed the District's commitment to rulemaking on port emissions, indicating that an indirect source rule on container terminals would be presented to the Board by the first

¹ South Coast Air Quality Management District, 2022 Air Quality Management Plan- Policy Brief Black Box Measures; https://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/clean-air-plans/air-quality-management-plans/2022-air-quality-management-plan/final-2022-aqmp/black-box_final.pdf?sfvrsn=4

² [Broad Gains in Clean Air Progress at Port of Los Angeles | News | Port of Los Angeles.](#)

quarter of 2025^{3,4} It's time to fulfill your commitment by passing a strong, enforceable rule that establishes a true **emission reduction framework** and holds the ports accountable.⁵

An Emission Reduction Framework for Infrastructure is Vital

This new rule on infrastructure does not include emission reduction requirements. We all know that infrastructure alone will not deliver emission reductions, but by setting clear targets that require an incremental transition to 100% zero-emission port operations based on current vehicle/equipment inventories at the ports, coupled with consistent emission reductions in criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas emission, we can start addressing the needs of our region.

For nearly two decades, the ports have had endless opportunities to take action through voluntary measures, yet the scale of pollution in communities near the ports remains staggering.⁶ The communities most burdened by port pollution—predominantly low-income communities of color—continue to suffer the health consequences of this inaction. The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are “responsible for more than 100 tons per day of smog—and particulate-forming nitrogen oxides—more than the daily emissions from all 6 million cars in the region.”⁷ A meaningful PR 2304 must not be another planning exercise; it must be a regulatory measure with enforceable emission reduction targets that ensure the transition to cleaner infrastructure translates into measurable air quality improvements demonstrated quarterly.

To that end, we urge SCAQMD to ensure that PR 2304 ties emissions reductions to infrastructure planning. This requirement for emission reduction targets through infrastructure can happen at the assessment level. Just as energy demand and supply, cost, and funding must be assessed, so too must the amount of emission reductions being anticipated. Only those plans offering sound and measurable strategies for maximizing emission reductions should be entertained. In addition, all infrastructure proposals must be coupled with detailed reports clarifying the percentage of zero-emission technology

³ Letter from Vanessa Delgado, Chair of the Governing Board of South Coast Air Quality Management District to Joseph Goffman, Assistant Administrator Office of Air and Radiation- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Liane M. Randolph, Chair California Air Resources Board (July 22, 2024); https://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/clean-air-plans/aqmd-commitment-letter_7-16-24.pdf?sfvrsn=22.

⁴ [EPA-CPRG-072224.pdf](#).

⁵ Filling this commitment to clear targets also gives original equipment manufacturers much-needed guidance on timelines for developing zero-emission technology that can be deployed to achieve emission reductions.

⁶ [Editorial: Another year, another broken promise to curb air pollution from L.A. ports - Los Angeles Times](#).

⁷ [Clean Port](#) (as of March 2025).

operating at each terminal to ensure that on balance, ports are shifting to majority zero-emission operations that deliver emission reductions.

While investments in zero-emission infrastructure at the ports are vital, not all investments will bring immediate benefits. The rule should **prioritize infrastructure that delivers the greatest emission reductions in frontline communities** as quickly as possible. It must also ensure that infrastructure plans lead to real reductions in pollution rather than merely offering long-term aspirations without enforcement mechanisms. Transparency and accountability are key to locking in progress to clean the air and eliminate harmful sources of pollution.

Setting Enforceable Emission Reduction Targets is Feasible

Setting **enforceable emissions reduction targets** is not a novel concept—the ports themselves have adopted targets under the Clean Air Action Plan. The difference with PR 2304 is that it would hold the ports accountable for meeting those commitments and ensure that infrastructure deployment is coordinated with clear emissions reduction mandates. Even as far back as 2007, the District was contemplating a “backstop” to the Ports’ actions to provide assurance that, if emissions do not continue to meet projections, the air district will ensure that the Ports’ develop and implement additional plans to get back on track. (South Coast Air Quality Management District, AQMP 2012 SIP Submittal). We need PR 2304 to deliver on that promise by ensuring emission reduction targets are embedded in the rule and that there is a clear mechanism to keep the ports on track toward meeting these targets.

This rule can ensure that port operations align with the public health needs of the region by maximizing reductions in facility-wide emissions, rather than allowing pollution levels to remain unchecked.

We urge this Board to finalize PR 2304 this year, ensuring that it is structured as a robust, enforceable rule that delivers tangible relief to overburdened communities. We cannot afford further delays or half-measures. A strong Port ISR will not only fulfill SCAQMD’s mandate but will also set a precedent for how emissions from goods movement can be effectively managed.

We will continue working with staff to further refine this rule as we engage in working groups and other forums to offer proposed language and suggestions for meeting these goals. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting public health.

Sincerely,

[Signatories on next page]

SCAQMD
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Fernando Gaytan, Senior Attorney, **Earthjustice**

Alison Hahm, Staff Attorney, **Natural Resources Defense Council**

Marven E. Norman, **Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice**

Taylor Thomas, Co-Executive Director, **East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice**

Cristhian Tapia-Delgado, Climate Campaigner, Southern California, **Pacific Environment**

Andrea Vidaurre, Co-Founder/ Policy Analyst & Advocate, **People's Collective for Environmental Justice**

Jennifer Cardenas, Campaign Organizer, **Sierra Club**

Theral Golden, President, **West Long Beach Association**

Cc: Wayne Nastri, Executive Officer - email: wnastri@aqmd.gov

Ian McMillan, Deputy Executive Officer - email: imacmillan@aqmd.gov