

Resolution on intermodal transfer station

WHEREAS, the Roanoke Valley region already has a significant air quality problem. The Salem and Raleigh Court monitors for soot (PM 2.5, particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in diameter) had two of the three highest annual average readings in the state in 2005 and exceeded EPA standards for public health.

WHEREAS, soot (PM 2.5) threatens death or illness to 1/3 of those exposed to high levels. At-risk groups include children, anyone who is active outdoors, and anyone with heart or respiratory problems. A 15-year study led by the Harvard School of Public Health (2006) showed that exposure to slightly higher levels of soot for one year or more boosted the risk of death by 27 percent to 32 percent for patients with diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and congestive heart failure. When pollution levels fell, the death rates returned to expected levels within two years. Many other studies support similar conclusions.

WHEREAS, the threat is worst for those who live, work or go to school within a few miles of the source.

WHEREAS, diesel engines are the main source of soot in the Roanoke Valley. In November 2003, the PM 2.5 Workgroup of the State Advisory Board concluded that, "the Interstate 81 corridor and other transportation emission sources must constitute the majority of [soot] emissions in the Roanoke area, because [local industries] comprise 20% or less of total emissions in these counties."

WHEREAS, an intermodal station would introduce more idling locomotives and highway trucks to the area as well as off-road diesel engines. Of these, the facility itself could only control the off-road emissions - not highway trucks or locomotives. Regulations for locomotives are not even expected until 2011 and will take decades to implement.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Greater Roanoke Valley Asthma and Air Quality Coalition opposes location of an intermodal transfer station in this region until all vehicles (locomotives, highway trucks, off-road vehicles) involved with the facility are using ultra low sulfur diesel and are equipped with EPA-approved filtering devices.