

OPINION

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INLAND VALLEY
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CONTAINER FEE

Traffic, smog must be curbed

The twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are major economic engines for Southern California. The cargo moving through the ports supports the logistics industry that is so important to the Inland Valley.

But there are two big minuses to that goods movement: the traffic congestion that is one of the biggest downsides to life in the region, and the air pollution that increases the incidence of asthma and other lung afflictions among our children.

That's why we join with elected officials from cities along the Alameda Corridor East in supporting a state bill that would establish a new fee on the transport of cargo containers and use the revenue to lessen traffic congestion and smog.

Pomona City Councilman George Hunter, who is also chairman of the Alameda Corridor East Construction Authority, and other elected officials met recently in San Gabriel to express their support for the cargo-fee legislation, Senate Bill 974 by Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach.

Revenue from the new fee would help ease the "explosive growth" of train transport projects, Hunter said.

The cargo fee, which would apply to goods moved by train or truck, would be divided in half, one portion going to traffic relief and the other to air quality improvements.

"The impact of rail and truck traffic without the necessary resources to mitigate such impacts will increase major freeway congestion, degrade air quality, increase safety concerns, and increase maintenance needs of existing streets and freeways," said Ron Wood, executive director of the San Gabriel Economic Partnership.

The Inland Valley is affected as well.

Motorists here see the effect every day on the congested 60, 10 and 15 freeways, where much of the traffic is made up of trucks, and at railroad crossings where cars have to wait for longer and longer trains to pass by.

And we breathe the fallout from good movements every day. A comprehensive study of 1,700 Southern California children by USC's Keck School of Medicine found that 10 percent of the children monitored in Upland, for example, had reduced lung capacity; and that a child raised in that city was five times as likely to grow up with diminished lung capacity as a child reared in a coastal community. Particulate matter, which comes largely from diesel exhausts, appears to be the largest contributor to reduced lung function.

Union Pacific Railroad said it has no comment on the legislation because the bill has not been finalized. We think railroads and truck lines should get behind this cargo fee, which would probably add a buck or two to a \$1,000 TV from China that gets sold in Kansas.

Projections have the number of containers that move through Southern California tripling to 48 million annually over the next 20 years.

If the regional additions to traffic and smog are not mitigated somehow, we'll have complete gridlock and an air-quality disaster.