

November 20, 2024

Dear Port of Oakland Board of Commissioners,

The undersigned organizations strongly urge you to **delay a certification vote** on the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Oakland International Airport (OAK) Terminal Modernization and Development project until the Health Impact Assessment, requested by the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) Oct. 16, 2023 comment letter, which references health concerns from air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise and vibration concerns, has been conducted.

Our undersigned organizations represent thousands of members in Oakland and neighboring communities who are deeply concerned about the environmental and public health impacts of increased aircraft operations on the livability of our communities.

We oppose both the certification of the FEIR and any Proposed Project planning elements that would enable the airport to expand air traffic operations until such time as you are able to demonstrate, through a Health Impact Assessment, that the health of vulnerable communities near the airport and under the flight paths, already designated as high priority communities by both the state of California and the City of Oakland, will not be negatively impacted.

We call on the Port of Oakland Board of Commissioners to demonstrate climate and environmental justice leadership by recognizing the health effects of air pollution and noise impacts from aircraft operations, as well as the true community and climate costs associated with increased air traffic.

FEIR Fails to Address Health Risks, Overlooks Key Exposures and Disparities in East Oakland We request for the Port to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for East Oakland, as recommended by the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) in its Oct. 16, 2023 comment letter in response to the Draft EIR. The current Health Risk Assessment commissioned by the Port, conducted by an engineering firm instead of a public health agency, is inadequate, covering only a narrow range of health-relevant exposures and failing to consider existing health disparities. For example, while the 318-page Health Risk Assessment mentions “cancer” 686 times, it makes no reference to critical health concerns like asthma, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, premature birth, dementia, inflammation, or other significant health impacts associated with contaminants from airport and aircraft operations. The HIA recommended by the ACPHD would, however, provide a comprehensive evaluation of the Proposed Project and expanded aircraft operations, taking into account baseline health inequities, cumulative impacts, and residents’ concerns.

The Port has both a responsibility and a moral obligation to protect the health of Oakland residents. As an independent agency of the City of Oakland, it must ensure that any modernization and expansion plans align with the City's goals and General Plan. Commissioning an HIA by a qualified, independent public health expert is a critical first step in upholding this duty and prioritizing the health and wellbeing of our communities.

“Significant and Unavoidable” Emissions is an Unacceptable Standard The FEIR concedes that air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the Proposed Project would be "significant and unavoidable," yet justifies them as acceptable, arguing that the Port does not directly regulate these emissions. However, by providing the infrastructure that enables expanded aircraft operations at OAK, the Port directly contributes to these harmful impacts. As an independent agency, the Port has not only a regulatory but also a profound moral obligation to prevent or mitigate damage to public health and the environment. The Port must take responsibility for the consequences of its actions, and not undertake expanding operations that endanger the well-being of local communities and undermine efforts to combat climate change.

While the California Environmental Quality Act may not require the FEIR to address flight emissions directly, the Board of Port Commissioners should not disregard these significant effects. Although the Port has no obligation to accommodate or facilitate activities that harm the health of Oakland residents, neighboring communities, and our climate, the Port should prioritize its responsibility to protect public health and environmental sustainability over any push for operational growth.

FEIR Relies on an Outdated Noise Metric and Threshold to Determine Significant Impact Currently Under FAA Reassessment The FEIR relies on the outdated 65 decibel Day Night Average Sound Level (DNL) noise criterion, leading to the misleading conclusion that a projected 33% increase in aircraft operations from 2019 to 2038 (and a 74% increase from 2021 to 2038), including more nighttime flights, will result in "no substantial increase in aircraft noise." This criterion overlooks key factors that impact residents—namely, the count of noise events (how many), and the level of noise (how loud), which the DNL metric fails to count. Nighttime aircraft noise, in particular, poses serious risks to public health, which the criterion does not adequately account for.

It is unacceptable to approve an FEIR that relies on an outdated criterion to assess "significant" noise impact. The FAA itself has acknowledged the limitations of DNL 65 in its 2021 Neighborhood Environmental Study, which prompted its current noise policy review. While change is clearly on the way, the FAA has confirmed that the new policy will not be applied retroactively. Moving forward with the Proposed Project based on this outdated standard will lock our local communities into long-term harm that cannot be

corrected once the new standards take effect.

FEIR is Based on Outdated Information on Passenger Traffic and Air Quality Standards

The FEIR fails to consider the impact of significant developments that have occurred and impose new realities on the Port.

The FEIR uses 2019 as a baseline and the forecast increases in air travel demand for both 2028 and 2038 are based on pre-pandemic demand levels. Port financial reports for the last three years however show that air travel demand has not achieved pre-Covid levels and that the Port's FEIR forecast market demand is inflated. For example, the FEIR projections are off by 23.3% for FY 2028 according to updated data in the Port's own July 2024 financial report. The report explains that this is due to reduced business travel with the widespread adoption of web-based virtual meeting arrangements post-Covid. The FEIR assertion that the Proposed Project needs to occur as planned to accommodate the market demand is therefore flawed and not supported by actual post-Covid data.

The EPA released a new National Ambient Air Quality Standard on Feb.7, 2024, lowering the allowable level of particulate matter (soot), PM from 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District announced its full support for the new rule the same day it was released, stating that the stronger standards will drive "additional health protections for Bay Area residents, particularly those living in communities disproportionately impacted by air pollution". Although Alameda County, where OAK is located, is under the current cap, it is expected to be out of compliance in 2026 when EPA determined compliance will be under the new rule. The California Air Resources Board recognizes that emissions at airports "contribute a significant amount of air pollution" which means that OAK will likely be required to take steps to reduce emissions. This cannot be achieved by increasing the number of aircraft operations, whether OAK regulates aircraft emissions or not.

The Port Is Failing to Exercise its Authority to Impose Meaningful Mitigation Measures on Emissions, Despite its Ability to Do So Regardless of Direct Regulatory Control

While the Port's efforts to reduce emissions from ground operations are laudable, these efforts do not get anywhere close to offsetting the impact of the projected increase in emissions from the forecasted increase in aircraft operations. For example, flight emissions are 99% of SFO's carbon footprint, and airport ground operations are 1% of SFO's carbon footprint as published in their 2021 climate action plan. It is critical that flight emissions be capped and not expanded.

The Port should explore ways to reduce emissions by limiting flights by high emission flight sectors such as, for example, cargo and private jet flights. To respond to the climate impacts of air travel, the industry has put false hope in so-called "sustainable

aviation fuel” (SAF). To date, the scale and efficacy of these fuels is highly questionable at best, and total greenwashing at worst. The amount of land needed to produce SAF crops is staggering, and this use will ultimately take land out of carbon sequestering production, resulting in net negative climate impacts. To date, SAF is 0.2% of aviation fuels with little hope of increasing this number in significant ways for decades.

The Port should not accommodate more aircraft operations, which will inevitably increase emissions and pollution; instead it must find ways to clean up current aircraft operations.

Respectfully (26 organizations)

1. 350 East Bay
2. 1000 Grandmothers for Future Generations
3. Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance (AICA)
4. Bay Area-System Change not Climate Change
5. Biofuelwatch
6. Citizens’ Climate Lobby, Alameda County Chapter
7. Del Amo Action Committee
8. Extinction Rebellion SF Bay
9. First Wednesdays San Leandro
10. Flight Free USA
11. FumeFighters United VNY
12. HOPE Collaborative
13. Interfaith Climate Action Network of CCC
14. No Coal in Oakland
15. Oil and Gas Action Network
16. Peace and Freedom Party Alameda County Chapter
17. Plane Sense 4 Long Island
18. San Leandro 2050
19. San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
20. Save Our Skies East Bay (SOSEB)
21. Scientist Rebellion Turtle Island West
22. Stop OAK Expansion Steering Committee
23. Sunflower Alliance
24. West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs
25. West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP)
26. Youth Power Climate Action