

**Statement of the Honorable Ronald O. Loveridge
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Testimony Before the

**Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**

**Port Development and the Environment at the Ports of Los Angeles
and Long Beach**

August 4, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee this afternoon. Goods Movement is one of the most important public policy issues facing Southern California---the state and our nation. The City of Riverside is over sixty miles inland from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, but it is one of the most negatively impacted cities by freight train traffic, as goods move from the ports to the rest of the country.

Goods Movement and the Regional Economy

California is the number one freight destination in the United States by value, and the state's freight movement is centered on the five-county Southern California region. In 2007, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach handled approximately 40 percent of all of the containers entering the United States. In 2006, the Port of Los Angeles and the Port of Long Beach were the first and second busiest container ports in the country.

Consequently, rail traffic in the region is expected to increase 240 percent... from 91 million tons in 1995 to 309 million tons in 2020. *More than 75 percent of the rail freight exiting the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach travels through the Inland Empire to destinations in every state.*

Impact on our City

The City of Riverside, with nearly 300,000 residents and employment of over 167,000 is directly impacted by the rail traffic moving from the ports to the rest of the nation. The city is trisected by two major freight lines, the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

In 2003, 68 million tons of rail freight passed through Riverside County with less than 5 percent of that total either originating or ending locally. Our location within the Southern California goods movement network makes Riverside “ground zero” for train/automobile interaction, which creates problems unique to the city and our residents. The impact of goods movement on our mobility is a major challenge for our city and is the top quality of life concern of our residents.

On a daily basis, as many as 128 trains move through the City of Riverside. As a result, the residents of Riverside currently encounter the crossing gates down for an average of three hours per day and as long as six hours per day at each of the twenty-six priority at-grade crossings in the city.

These blockages of major thoroughfares directly impact:

- Public safety emergency response times;
- Vehicular safety;
- Air quality; and,
- Economic development.

Public Safety

Goods movement can be an issue of life or death. In our City, responding police, fire and EMT vehicles were delayed 769 times in 2007, with delays as long as 32 minutes. Just a few minutes can make a critical difference for cardiac arrest, stroke, and traffic accident victims.

Because fire grows exponentially, a delay of only a few minutes allows a fire to further intensify, causing great destruction and increasing the likelihood of injury or death.

Vehicular Safety

Between 1998 and 2007, the following incidents occurred:

- In the City of Riverside, 29 highway-rail incidents, resulting in six injuries and seven fatalities.
- In Riverside County, 53 highway-rail incidents, resulting in 10 deaths and 10 injuries. There have been 4 fatalities in Riverside County during the past two months.
- In the state of California, 1,080 highway-rail incidents, resulting in 220 deaths and 370 injuries.

As the Committee develops a comprehensive goods movement program for the next transportation bill, a safety component must be considered.

Air Quality Hazard

According to the California's Goods Movement Action Plan, goods movement is now the dominant contributor to transportation-related emissions in the State.

Adverse health impacts from pollutants include premature death, cancer risk, respiratory illnesses, and increased risk of heart disease. California Air Resource Board staff estimate that current emissions related to goods movement result in approximately 640 premature deaths per year in California. Without additional emission controls, that figure is estimated to rise to approximately 915 premature deaths per year by 2020.

Eliminating at-grade crossings will reduce the levels of pollutants released by idling cars, trucks and buses stopped for rail traffic, which now generate 45 tons annually in Riverside County. The impact would increase to 212 tons annually by 2030, as traffic is expected to back up as much as three miles each time the crossing gate goes down.

Economic Development

Addressing these at-grade crossings is paramount for the City's long-term economic development.

For example, employees at one of the city's major employment centers, Hunter Business Park, must pass through the Iowa Avenue at-grade

crossing to reach the 215 freeway. The crossing gate was down for 6 hours per day in September 2007, which is already close to the 2030 estimate of 6.29 hours per day. And the gate down time will only increase as the number of trains increase to 169 per day by 2030. These delays decrease the productivity for the employees in the course of their work, as well as hinder their personal obligations as they drive to appointments or pick up their children from school.

The city is working to pull together the \$32 million in local, state and federal funds needed to complete this grade separation project, and construction is scheduled to begin in early 2010.

Conclusion --- Grade Separations

The elimination of at-grade railroad crossings throughout Southern California ranks among the most critical elements of the goods movement solution, improving safety, traffic mobility and air quality.

The main challenge is funding. While the city and the county are committed to providing local funding, we need additional state and federal assistance to help pay for impacts of national goods movement in local communities.

In November 2006, Californians overwhelmingly voted for Proposition 1B, which authorized the sale of \$19.9 billion in general obligation bonds to relieve local congestion, enhance safety, speed goods movement, and improve air quality. Proposition 1B will be a great stimulus for the State. In Riverside, for example, seven grade separations are under design and one is under construction. ***However, at a cost of \$30-50 million per grade separation we need the federal government to be a committed partner to make a real impact in alleviating the impact of national goods movement in the region.***

Identifying new funding sources must be a primary issue in the upcoming year.

My Congressman, Ken Calvert, recently introduced the ON TIME Act. This bill is a good first step in addressing the regional impacts of goods movement, and working through the challenges of financing these important infrastructure projects.

As the Committee begins to draft the next transportation bill, I am committed to working with you to provide local perspective as the Mayor of Riverside and a national overview as the second vice president of the National League of Cities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this afternoon on these very important issues. I look forward to answering any questions that the committee members may have.