

Environment Report: Advocates Want Zero-Emission Trucks in Portside Neighborhoods

Posted By *Mackenzie Elmer* On December 7, 2020 @ 2:07 pm



A school bus drives through Barrio Logan. / Photo by Sam Hodgson

Another air pollution threat lurks over the San Diego Bay's industrial portside neighborhoods. This time, environmental justice advocates are putting pressure on an international automobile manufacturer to use zero-emission trucks, even though they're not commercially available yet.

"We know it's feasible and economically viable and we think it's reasonable," said Diane Takvorian, executive director and co-founder of nonprofit Environmental Health Coalition. "We're not saying we want 100 percent electric (trucks) on day one. But we understand this company needs to change its business model."

Mitsubishi Cement Company wants to build a new warehouse and hauling facility along the Tenth Avenue Marine Terminal, which is smack dab in the middle of new "environmental justice zones" established under a 2017 state law. The zones include the neighborhoods of National

City, Barrio Logan, Logan Heights and Sherman Heights, which are already blighted by worse air pollution because they're so close to heavy traffic from San Diego's shipyards.

The project would add up to 176 new truck trips per day.^[1], according to an environmental impact report. The Port of San Diego board votes Tuesday on Mitsubishi Cement Company's proposed lease, which contains what advocates say is a weak zero-emissions requirement: It amounts to Mitsubishi incorporating just one zero-emission truck as a kind of test project within the first year of the business' operation.

In June, California's Air Resources Board called for half of all commercial trucks and vans sold in the state^[2] to be zero-emission by 2035 and 100 percent by 2045.

"We've got three times the county average for (child) asthma and five times the rate over communities like La Jolla," Takvorian said. "Here's an opportunity to get ahead of (state requirements) and do better in one of the most polluted communities in California."

The electric vehicle market experienced a slump in 2019^[3]. China has dominated the market for heavy duty electric trucks since 2014 but the market is still considered "nascent" in the United States and Canada. Experts believe electric truck demand will double by 2023 thanks in part to increased regulatory requirements (like California's), the Union-Tribune reported.

Now every major truck and bus manufacturer is developing at least one all-electric vehicle prototype^[4], according to an October report by the nonprofit Environmental Defense Fund and the International Council on Clean Transportation. Mitsubishi Fuso has had an electric-powered light truck^[5] on the market for a few years now. But the heavier the truck, the more energy is needed to move the auto.

"I think once these orders start coming through, the manufacturing is going to ramp up as well," Takvorian said.

The coalition wants the Port board to delay its vote on the lease, at least until new commissioners are seated in January. That includes Sandy Naranjo, who will represent National City^[6] on the seven-commissioner board. She sat on the steering committee for that 2017 law guaranteeing special protections for environmental justice communities.

Notably, Mitsubishi Cement Company promised to buy trucks that are no more than five years old, meaning its technology would be newer and likely more efficient. But the company isn't promising to transition to zero-emission vehicles until it's "deemed feasible" by further study.

Committing to a “zero emission feasibility study” would be part of its deal with the Port to secure business there.

Staff at the Port District said this is the first time zero-emission truck standards would be written into a company’s lease with a large port.

Mitsubishi Cement Corporation did not return a request for comment Monday.

Antarctic Icy Plain Named After Scripps Glaciologist

A “piedmont glacier” in Antarctica will be named after Scripps Institution of Oceanography’s Helen Fricker.

A glacier is a slow-moving mass of ice formed by layers and layers of compacting snow over many years. There are nine different types of glaciers, and a *piedmont* is Italian for, basically, what the ice is doing: spilling from a steep valley glacier into a large flat plain, spreading into “bulb-like” lobes.

The British Antarctic Territory named the spot on the continent’s upper peninsula after Fricker to honor her pioneering work using satellites to show how “great floods of water can move beneath an ice sheet.”

“It’s kind of odd to have something named after you when you’re still alive,” Fricker told the Union-Tribune ^[7]. “But this is really a big thing. The piedmont is larger than Point Loma.”



The Fricker Ice Piedmont — named after Scripps Institution of Oceanography glaciologist Helen Fricker — is on Adelaide Island. / Image courtesy of the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics

The Fricker Ice Piedmont is 7.5 miles wide and almost four miles deep on the eastern side of Adelaide Island. Future maps of the icy terrain will now feature her name. The dedication is part of the 200th anniversary of the discovery of Antarctica and you can [read more about the other 27 scientists with dedications](#) [8].

In Other News

Paleontologists uncovered fossilized bones ^[9] of a 15- to 16 million-year-old ancestor of modern wolves and foxes at the Caltrans Otay Mesa Port of Entry construction site this summer. (San Diego Magazine)

Santa Ana winds are no joke. More high gusts are coming and may knock out power ^[10] for 50,000 in high fire-threat districts in eastern San Diego County. A red flag warning is in effect until 10 p.m. Tuesday. (Union-Tribune)

The Port of San Diego tested out a new colorful lighting array. ^[11] for the Coronado Bay Bridge. The next step is an environmental review of the project. (Port of San Diego)

King tides (a common term for seasonal exceptionally high tides) are coming Dec. 13-15 ^[12], which means waves will slam into the Southern California coast more than usual, sometimes causing flooding or dangerous conditions near the cliffs. California King Tides Project encourages the public to submit photos of the shoreline during these dates to visualize how future sea level rise might look. (California King Tides Project)

Correction: An earlier version of this story misidentified the maximum number of truck trips the Mitsubishi project would generate.

Article printed from Voice of San Diego: <https://www.voiceofsandiego.org>

URL to article: <https://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/science-environment/environment-report-advocates-want-zero-emission-trucks-in-portside-neighborhoods/>

URLs in this post:

[1] would add up to 176 new truck trips per day: <https://portofsandiego.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8956374&GUID=9F98048D-6E98-4348-82E0-17617A79F6D3>

[2] called for half of all commercial trucks and vans sold in the state:

<https://www.equipmentworld.com/zero-emissions-trucks-are-coming-one-way-or-another/>

[3] experienced a slump in 2019: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/business/energy-green/story/2020-02-25/mixed-results-in-2019-for-sales-of-californias-zero-emission-vehicles>

[4] is developing at least one all-electric vehicle prototype:

https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/documents/Race%20to%20Zero-ICCT_EDF_PQ-FINAL.pdf

[5] had an electric-powered light truck: <https://www.mitfuso.com/en-us/blog/electric-trucks-and-winter-fuso-ecanter-enters-into-its-third-winter-of-customer-operations>

[6] will represent National City: <https://voiceofsandiego.org/topics/politics/politics-report-the-not-inaccurate-story/>

[7] told the Union-Tribune: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/science/story/2020-12-04/antarctic-ucsd-researcher-helen-fricker>

[8] read more about the other 27 scientists with dedications:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-55171303>

[9] uncovered fossilized bones: https://www.sandiegomagazine.com/things-to-do/a-first-look-at-newly-discovered-fossils-in-san-diego/article_1219481e-35d3-11eb-927d-0f8c55e541d4.html

[10] are coming and may knock out power:

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/weather/story/2020-12-06/upwards-of-50-000-sdg-e-customers-face-power-outage-as-san-diego-braces-for-more-san-ana-winds>

[11] tested out a new colorful lighting array: <https://www.thelog.com/local/port-of-san-diego-conducts-lighting-test-on-the-san-diego-coronado-bay-bridge/>

[12] are coming Dec. 13-15: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/kingtides/>

Copyright © Voice of San Diego. All rights reserved.