

Remarks by Nancy Pfeffer, SCAG, as co-host of Faster Freight Cleaner Air Conference, Long Beach Convention Center, February 1, 2006:

I'm pleased to have the chance to provide SCAG's contribution to the "wrap-up" and next steps for this conference. I hope you'll pardon me for taking the opportunity to make it personal.

I live in Long Beach, about four miles northeast of here as the crow flies. I live downwind of the 710-405 interchange, downwind of the ports and right next door to the Long Beach Airport.

When I pick fruit off my citrus trees, it's black with soot. And when I see that air filter that South Coast AQMD Executive Officer Barry Wallerstein showed us on Monday – the one from a mile east of the 710, and a mile west of my house – the one that went from white to black in 24 hours – I get scared.

Which means I'm impatient to get this problem solved. As the ILWU's Jim Spinosa said at Monday's press conference, "Talk is not enough." I want to know, who can act?

- Regulators – local, state, and federal – can enact rules to reduce emissions (and other environmental and community impacts) from goods movement sources.
- Private businesses – shipping lines, marine terminal operators, trucking companies, railroads, engine manufacturers, oil companies and others – can profitably be responsible corporate citizens. Notice I said "profitably."
- The ports can include lease provisions that will reduce emissions and other impacts, and can continue and build on their own "green" initiatives.
- The labor unions can embrace technology, efficiency, and productivity – which will support their goals of safety and reduced emissions.
- Planning and transportation agencies can reflect local consensus in their short- and long-range spending plans.
- Academics can continue to publish compelling data on health effects and can also continue to develop and highlight innovative technologies and designs.
- Communities and their advocates can continue to push for all these actions, and can also remain constructively engaged in public decision making.
- And our elected leaders can lead the way by providing the laws, tools, and funds that will support implementation of local consensus.

I am happy to reflect that we have heard a great deal of hope in the proceedings this week. Wayne Nastri of EPA asked us to “become inspired,” and I am one of the “mavens” he spoke about.

David Freeman of the Port of LA said that “the stars have aligned themselves.” Barry Wallerstein pointed out that “goods movement is the single largest opportunity to improve air quality.” Michael Scheible of the Air Resources Board advised that we are “morally obligated” to act.

Mayor Villaraigosa said repeatedly that we are at a “watershed moment.” Hasan Ikhata of SCAG said that “it’s worth making this investment.” Mr. Freeman said we can “do it in this decade.”

Peter Peyton of the ILWU noted that “we need innovation and collaboration to make the fixes work.” Mayor Villaraigosa spoke of “unprecedented partnership” between LA and Long Beach, and said it will take “cajoling, compromise, and commitment” to move forward. Senator Lowenthal said “we can be the model for the rest of the world.”

When you look at the title of this conference, it says “Faster Freight Cleaner Air.” Notice that there is no word in between the two. Some may read the word “or” in there. The protesters outside the door believe that “faster freight does not equal or guarantee cleaner air.”

But I read an “and” between “faster freight” and “cleaner air.” Both Mayor Villaraigosa and Councilmember Janice Hahn said that we can have both good jobs and a healthy environment – and they were in good company when they said so.

As I worked with the Steering Committee on this conference, I pushed to have visionary, inspiring speakers on the agenda. I wanted all of us to come away not only with an understanding of the problem, but with optimism about the solution – and the energy to make it happen.

I hope that the conference has worked for you the way it has for me. I truly believe that the situation has come to this: If not now, when? If not us, who? Thank you for your attendance, and for all the action you will take in the future.