

[Port of San Diego to electrify freight trucks, cranes, even some tugboats by 2030](#)



Storage containers are loaded onto a Dole cargo ship at the 10th Avenue Marine Terminal.

(Jarrod Valliere/The San Diego Union-Tribune)

Port's goals exceed benchmarks set in Los Angeles and Long Beach. Dock workers fear jobs will be lost.

BY [JOSHUA EMERSON SMITH](#)

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The tens of thousands of diesel freight trucks that spew [harmful air pollution](#) in Barrio Logan and west National City on their way to the Port of San Diego will transition to battery-electric or some other zero-emission technology by 2030.

That's according to a pledge adopted by the Port's Board of Commissioners Tuesday at a contentious, five-hour-long public hearing that drew residents suffering from

toxic diesel emissions as well as many dockworkers fearful that the ambitious transition could cost them their livelihoods.

The goal — part of a sweeping [Maritime Clean Air Strategy](#) — comes five years ahead of a state-mandated transition for heavy-duty trucks and exceeds efforts at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

Commissioner Sandy Naranjo said at Tuesday's hearing that the issue of diesel pollution was personal for her, having suffered a severe asthma attack at the age of three.

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“It’s disturbing, that 31 years after my diagnosis ... children of color that live in our portside environmental justice communities are still being diagnosed with severe asthma above the San Diego County average,” she said at the meeting.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union, locals 94 and 29, opposed the transition as a [job killer](#). They argued the requirement will jeopardize the Port’s roughly 25,000 jobs as companies that import goods into the region look for cheaper places to do business.

“This initiative will at the very least hinder my ability to do my job, and at the very worst, it could end my job due to the high cost of doing business in California,” said Crystal Cruz, second-generation local dockworker.

The blueprint has several short-term goals, most notably requiring at least 40 percent of freight trucks that visit the terminals in Barrio Logan and National City to be zero-emission by 2026. Port officials said they’re developing a registry system to track compliance with private truck operators.

Commissioner Dan Malcolm said he supported the 2030 benchmark but expressed concern about requiring the mid-term target. He cast the lone vote against the plan, with Commissioner Garry Bonelli absent.

“This is a very serious thing we’re talking about right now,” Malcolm said at the meeting. “I think it will have a very profound chilling effect on industry. We all want clean air, but we have to do it realistically.”

The Maritime Clean Air Strategy also called for transitioning diesel cargo-handling equipment, such as cranes, drayage trucks and forklifts to zero-emission technology by 2030. The Port’s benchmark comes five years before a state mandate to phase out diesel engines for such equipment.

The pledges only apply to the Tenth Avenue Marine Terminal and the National City Marine Terminal. Independent shipyards, such as General Dynamics NASSCO, BAE Systems San Diego Ship Repair and Continental Maritime, are [drafting separate plans](#) to cut emission with the San Diego Air Pollution Control District.

Harbor craft such as tugboats are also subject to the Port’s newly adopted blueprint, which calls for slashing their diesel emissions in half by the end of the decade. While some of those reductions could come from hybrid vehicles, Crowley Shipping is expected to launch the country’s first [all-electric tug](#) in San Diego by 2023.

Another major source of pollution comes from large cargo ships that unload containers using massive diesel-powered cranes. Dole Food Co. already plugs into the electrical grid when its ships are docked at the Port.

The plan calls for adding more “shore power” at the National City terminal as well as the cruise ship terminals downtown by 2024.

Diane Takvorian, executive director of the Environmental Health Coalition, said adopting the clean-air strategy will help the Port pull down tens of millions of dollars in state funding for electrification.

“The time is now,” she said. “There’s never been more emphasis on funding for heavy-duty transition to zero-emission vehicles.”