



<https://www.stopoakexpansion.org/>

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### **WHY WE NEED TO STOP OAK EXPANSION**

#### **Q 1 - What is being proposed?**

**A 1-** The expansion plan, which is being marketed as a “modernization,” includes a new, third terminal with 16 new gates, 1,000 new parking spaces, reconfiguration and relocation of cargo and support facilities, upgrading the two existing terminals, consolidated ticketing, baggage and security facilities and more. A historic building would be demolished. As the City of Alameda has noted, “Many details remain unknown.”

The Stop OAK Expansion Coalition is not against modernization. We oppose this proposed expansion because it hurts community health and the climate.

#### **Q 2 - Who is proposing this expansion?**

**A 2-** The Port of Oakland proposed the project in 2021, referring to it as an “expansion.” After environmental concerns were raised, the Port began referring to it as “modernization,” without making significant changes. The Port was created by the City of Oakland to oversee Port lands, including the airport. It is an independent department acting as trustee for Californians.

In July 2023 the Port released a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Public comments were filed in October 2023.

The plan, or a revised version, must ultimately be approved by the Port and the Federal Aviation Administration and also meet California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.

#### **Q 3- Who opposes the plan and why?**

**A 3-** In addition to the Stop OAK Expansion Coalition's more than [75 environmental, youth, community/neighborhood, religious, labor, grassroots and scientific organizations](#), the City of Alameda has called on the Port to revise the plan and to engage community stakeholders in this process. The comment letters from [the Alameda County Public Health Department](#) and the [Bay Air Quality Management District](#) raised serious concerns and called for changes.

Public comments filed in October 2023 were highly critical of the plan, citing environmental, health, worker safety, noise, traffic, environmental justice and other concerns. See:

- [Comments from public agencies](#)
- [Comments from organizations](#)
- [Comments from individuals](#)

**Q 4 - What impact would the Port’s expansion plan have on the environment and public health?**

**A 4** – The Port admits the expansion would dramatically increase air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise. The expansion would increase greenhouse gas emissions by 34% and harmful air pollutants by 63%.

The Port’s Draft Environmental Impact Report does not adequately address the air pollution, noise and increased traffic impacts of its plan. All these factors impact the health of the community at large, and airport workers and people living close by or under flight paths are impacted much more severely.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District has called on the Port [in their written comments](#), to do more to mitigate and offset greenhouse gas and air quality emissions in its plans.

Annual Emissions from OAK		
	Current	With Expansion
CO2 per year	1,200,000 gas cars	1,608,000 gas cars
Nitrogen oxides (NOX) and particulate matter (PM)	310,000 gas cars	505,300 gas cars

Source: [airport tracker.org](#) and DEIR

The Port has tried to duck responsibility for addressing these impacts by noting it does not regulate plane emissions, although it acknowledges that health hazards of its plan are both significant and unavoidable. The Alameda County Public Health Department noted in its comments on the DEIR, “While market-based demand may drive airport expansion needs, it must be acknowledged that expansion will directly lead to GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions and that *these are only unavoidable within the context of pursuing expansion.*” (emphasis added)

Airport officials greenwash their operations, saying they are targeting a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. But [they leave out the airport’s largest source of emissions](#) - the flights themselves. These account for 99 % of a modern airport’s emission inventory.

**Q 5 - How would neighborhoods near the airport be affected?**

**A 5** - While all of the East Bay would be impacted by the increased pollution and greenhouse gasses, the Port’s proposal would have severe negative impacts for two groups: people who live near the airport and people who live under the flight paths of planes flying in and out of OAK.

As the Alameda Public Health Department has noted, “Airport pollution disproportionately impacts communities of color. East Oakland is a predominantly low-income, Hispanic/Latino and African American/Black community located in the airport’s vicinity.” The families that live there are at high risk from the proposed expansion. The California Air Resources Board named

East Oakland as a high priority community under Assembly Bill 617, which requires a Community Emissions Reduction Plan. It is also designated as a Disadvantaged Community under Senate Bill 1000.

These designations are not surprising. East Oakland has the highest rate of asthma in Alameda County, with three times the rate of emergency room admissions as the rest of the county. Heart disease, stroke, cancer and chronic respiratory disease are among the top causes of death. All are associated with air pollution. The Air District’s comment “strongly urges the Port to review and implement best practices on centering environmental justice (EJ) and health equity” in the project.

**Q 6- What justification does the Port offer for this expansion?**

**A 6 -** The Port claims, without supporting evidence, that “market-based projections” indicate that passenger traffic will more than double in the next 15 years, making expansion necessary. In fact, in the past few years [passenger traffic at OAK has failed to grow](#) at the projected rate and, recently, has actually dropped. The Port’s own reports indicate that the reason is that business air travel between northern and southern California has failed to return to pre-pandemic levels, because of web-based virtual meeting applications such as Zoom. It appears the Port is taking an “if you build it people will come” approach. If they do, pollution will increase, and negative climate and health impacts will increase along with it.

The Port also claims that expansion will create jobs and revenue for local government and businesses. The Stop OAK Expansion Coalition argues that a better plan could produce better economic and environmental benefits and fewer costs associated with increased pollution and associated health impacts. Good jobs do not make workers and their families sick.

Recent [research](#) shows that increasing airport capacity sets off complicated ripple effects on air fares, plane size, flight frequency and flight delays, in addition to passenger demand. There is no guarantee the Port’s rosy projections will come to pass. And if they do, there will be more pollution.

**Q 7 - How much would this expansion cost and who would pay?**

**A 7-** The Port has not released information about the cost of its plan or how it would be financed. Airport construction is generally paid for by a combination of government (taxpayer) funds and loans from Wall Street. The Port would earn money to repay the loans through fees paid by airport users, including airlines and passengers.

The Port has not taken the high social cost of carbon into account. The [EPA says](#) this “includes the value of all future climate change impacts (both negative and positive),” ranging from human health effects to changes in the frequency and severity of natural disasters.

<p><b>Current Social Cost of OAK</b></p> <p>OAK total flight emissions of 2.30 million tonnes of CO2 per year</p> <p>X</p> <p>social cost of carbon \$190 per ton</p> <p><b>TOTAL = \$437 Million per year</b></p> <p>Source of social cost: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmental-economics/scghg">https://www.epa.gov/environmental-economics/scghg</a></p>
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The Port has a track record of overbuilding and then having to refinance its debt. In the early 2000s the Port expanded the container shipping facilities, but the expected [growth in shipping did not materialize](#). A 2015 [report in the New Urbanist](#) found that the Port borrowed over \$1.4 billion for the shipping project, with the debt service costing \$100 million annually, amounting to one-third of the Port's operating budget. The Port refinanced \$544 billion in debt in 2020.

**Q 8 - Are there legal problems with this plan?**

**Q 8 -** Yes! A review of comments on the DEIR [filed by the City of Alameda](#) and [filed by the Center for Biodiversity](#) demonstrate that the Port's plan does not comply with basic requirements of the California Environmental Protection Act (CEQA) and NEPA. They point out that:

- The description of the project is inadequate.
- The basic assumptions underlying the plan are not supported by substantial evidence.
- The DEIR fails to adequately analyze the project's significant environmental, greenhouse gas, air quality, noise, health, transportation and safety impacts.

The plan also fails to adequately analyze and consider alternative and environmentally superior approaches or to consider ways to mitigate the negative impacts. If the Port moves forward with the current plan, it opens itself to legal challenges, wasting time and resources that could be better spent on redrafting the plan.

**Q 9 - What could a revised airport improvement plan do to limit climate change and create better jobs and neighborhoods?**

**A 9 -** [StopOAKexpansion.org](#) supports sustainable, environmentally responsible transportation as a key public service and benefit to the local economy. The Port of Oakland is strategically located and could be a leader in developing the kind of 21st century sustainable facilities that address both environmental justice and transportation needs.

To achieve this, the Port should engage community and key stakeholders to develop a responsible alternative that would be real modernization, not just old-fashioned expansion. It must not allow airlines to unduly influence its priorities or to abandon its responsibilities to the community and its workers.

**Q 10 - How can I get more information and help ensure Oakland's airport benefits both East Bay residents and travelers?**

**A 10 -** Visit [StopOAKexpansion.org](#) for more background and information on how you can get involved and make your voice heard. Contact City Council members and mayors in Oakland and the East Bay area and ask them to support calls for revising the plan and making a sustainable, 21<sup>st</sup> century facility. <https://www.stopoakexpansion.org/take-action>

Sources linked to in this document can be accessed through the online version at <https://www.stopoakexpansion.org/flyers>

Published by StopOAKexpansion Coalition May 2024