

# Oakland: Utah scraps \$53 million plan to ship coal to city

By David DeBolt, [ddebolt@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:ddebolt@bayareanewsgroup.com)  
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OAKLAND -- Four Utah counties have withdrawn their plan to spend \$53 million in state money to ship coal to Oakland, an official said this week.

Carbon County Commissioner Jae Potter's announcement Wednesday comes less than two months after the Oakland City Council voted 7-0 to ban the storage and handling of coal and petroleum coke in its city.

Potter said the four coal-producing counties will reapply in about a year with a more detailed application. The rural counties continue to support the project and may ask to ship other products like potash through Oakland, Potter said.

Utah lawmakers in March approved a bill to invest \$53 million of state money to ship coal to the Oakland Bulk and Oversized Terminal. The \$250 million export terminal and logistics center located on the Outer Harbor at the former Oakland Army Base is being built by developer Phil Tagami. Terminal Logistic Solutions, run by Jerry Bridges, has the exclusive option to operate the terminal.

Bridges has said coal would be one of several commodities shipped there; others include soda ash, potash, limestone, soybeans and other produce.

While shipments of coal had support from lawmakers and coal-producing counties in Utah, Oakland residents, activists and city leaders strongly objected to the proposal. The Oakland council vote was the only way to stop the coal trains because the council approved the project in 2013. Leaders claimed coal was not part of the conversation then, but the agreement did not specify what could and couldn't be shipped at the terminal.

Environmental groups argued West Oakland residents would be exposed to greater risks of respiratory illness.

"Polling shows Utahns don't want public money spent on a terminal in Oakland that will never ship coal," Brittany King, an organizer with the Sierra Club's San Francisco Bay Chapter, said in a statement. "Oakland residents and decision makers fought so hard to keep coal out of their backyard, so we are happy that Utah withdrew a proposal that is not worth money, time or the risk to public health and safety."

Longtime West Oakland activist Margaret Gordon expressed some skepticism over what would be included in Utah's new application.

"That economy in that state is built around coal," said Gordon, who supports the Oakland terminal but opposes coal. "I'm optimistically cautious about the whole thing."

A spokesman for Tagami did not return a phone call Friday afternoon. A day before the council's vote in June, Tagami's attorney wrote in a letter to city leaders that legal action would be imminent if coal were blocked. Attorney David Smith called the council's position "irrational" and "legally indefensible."

The Associated Press contributed to this report. David DeBolt covers Oakland. Contact him at 510-208-6453. Follow him at [Twitter.com/daviddebolt](https://twitter.com/daviddebolt).

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