

Media Interview

BNSF Intermodal Hub

At the June 16, 2025 Property Owners and Residents Association (PORA) General Membership meeting, a 5 person committee was established to assist PORA with information and decision making regarding a BNSF intermodal facility being proposed near Wittmann, 15 minutes from Sun City West.

Thank you for having me.

I'm speaking today as a member of the committee and as a concerned West Valley resident on behalf of many others who are simply asking for responsible planning. The proposed BNSF intermodal hub near Wittmann would be the largest of its kind in the country, and while we understand the value of freight infrastructure, this particular location raises significant concerns about safety, traffic, environmental impact, and quality of life, to name a few.

These are some of the concerns we have that compel us to ask the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to consider as it votes on this project in this location.

Our goal is NOT to stop progress, but to make sure it's done in a way that protects existing communities, especially those that are rural, residential, and vulnerable.

Q – Can you briefly explain what the BNSF Intermodal Hub project is?

Sure. The proposed BNSF Intermodal hub is a large scale logistics facility that would be located near Wittmann. It would span over 4,300 acres, which is the size of all of The Grand, and 5 times the size of Central Park. It would include millions of square feet of concrete infrastructure. The project aims to serve as a major transfer point for freight between trains and trucks, potentially make it the largest of its kind in the nation.

Q2 – What land is currently being considered for the project?

BNSF has purchased over 4,300 acres of Arizona State Trust Land. That land is currently zoned RU-43, which is designated for rural residential use – **NOT INDUSTRIAL**. To move forward, the project requires a zoning change from Maricopa County.

Q3 – What are the primary concerns from members of the surrounding community?

Community concerns fall into two main categories, each with specific risks and implications:

The first of which is Traffic and Infrastructure.

This facility is projected to bring over 22,000 additional vehicle trips PER DAY by 2038, including freight trucks. Roads like US Route 60, State Route 74, and 211th Avenue are already in poor condition, and some are NOT designed for industrial traffic. Risks include dangerous congestion, rapid road damage and increased taxpayer repair costs.

The second Community Concern is public health and safety.

Many residents rely on well water, which could be contaminated by diesel or hazardous spills.

BNSF has not shared a public emergency response plan for environmental incidents. Past examples include the 2023 East Palestine, OH derailment and the 2024 Rose Fire, near Wickenburg, caused by BNSF.

Diesel emissions will worsen the West Valley's already declining air quality. Nearby residents will be especially vulnerable due to respiratory conditions.

Increased noise, vibration, and light pollution dark skies will disrupt resident's way of life.

Q3 Is this opposition anti-rail or anti-development in general?

No, not at all. Most residents recognize the importance of freight infrastructure and economic development. The concern here is about location and planning – or lack of. Many feel this project would be better suited to an area that is already zoned for industrial use and located closer to major highways or urban industrial corridors.

Q4 What is BNSF's stated benefit of this project?

According to BNSF and publicly available data, the project is expected to enhance freight efficiency, and create economic opportunities, including potential job growth in the logistics and transportation sectors.

The BNSF facility in Glendale is over capacity, and this requires long range trucking to and from the Phoenix area. The Wittmann project could allow these trucks to be replaced by trains.

Q5 Has an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) been required?

No, it has not. Maricopa County does not currently require an Environmental Impact Statement as part of its zoning approval process. Many residents feel that given the size and scope of this project, an EIS should be mandated to fully evaluate the long-term effects.

Q6 What is the timeline for decision making?

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors were scheduled to vote on the zoning change request on August 20th, but this was rescheduled to November 5th. We just do not know at this time if it will go for a vote on that date. The Board of Supervisors will need to vote on a zoning change request and a major comprehensive plan amendment to the 2023 White Tank Grand Avenue Area Plan. These votes will determine whether the project can proceed as planned on the currently residential-zone land. Depending on these votes, construction could begin in late 2025 with operations beginning in 2028. This is what we know today.

Q7 How can residents learn more or get involved?

Residents can contact their local representatives, attend any public hearings at the Planning and Zoning Department, and Maricopa County Board of Supervisors meeting room in downtown Phoenix, and visit PORA at 13815 W Camino Del Sol or online at porascw.org to obtain copies of letters and lists of representatives. There will be a drive through letter signing event October 29 from 9-12 at PORA.

A newsworthy note, is that the City of Surprise passed a resolution against the BNSF development on October 7th at their City Council meeting.

Thanks for allowing the PORA BNSF Committee to share this information and some of the concerns that compel us to ask the Board of Supervisors to consider as it votes on this project, in this location.

We believe development should work with communities, not steamroll over them. There may be better-suited locations for a project of this magnitude, and the people of the West Valley deserve a voice in shaping the future of their neighborhoods.

We are calling on the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to require a full environmental review and to listen to the thousands of residents raising valid, fact-based concerns. This is about more than zoning. It's about HEALTH, SAFETY, and protecting the integrity of our homes.

PORA will maintain close communication with STATE, COUNTY, LOCAL and railroad representatives in order to monitor any construction, if approved. As noted before, the issues of ROADS, TRAFFIC, SAFETY CONTROL, and ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS remain concerns and must be closely monitored.