

09-15-2025 PORA Open Members Meeting

Board: Ralph Johnson, President, govt. committee

David Hunter, Vice President, govt committee, BNSF committee

Rosemary Dougherty, Treasurer (absent)

Tom Jones, BNSF Committee

Cindy Putman, Secretary, Gallery, Transit committee

BNSF: David Hunter and Tom Jones – PORA Liasons

Committee members: Dawn “DeeDee” Runner, Tony Deluca, Mary Beth Kunze, Russell “Mark” Tucker, (absent) Stephanie Peters (absent)

DeeDee Runner read the following:

BNSF is proposing an intermodal rail facility, Logistics Park and Logistics Center on over 4,000 acres near the community of Wittman, AZ, a short 15 minutes from Sun City West. This is a large scale facility which will include millions of square feet of infrastructure. At the June 16, 2025 PORA General Membership meeting, a 5 person committee was established to assist PORA with informal and decision making regarding the BNSF facility being proposed. At this meeting, an Opposition Letter was provided to PORA for review.

At its first Committee meeting, discussion was held about community concerns, and documented evidence of those concerns. A Community Concerns hand-out was established at that time, and has been provided to the public via face-to-face contact and on-line via the PORA web site, e-news and newsletters. The Community Concerns document with references has been available upon request, along with the Opposition Letter. Once completed, these Opposition Letters are delivered to Lisa Everett, who scans them and presents each to the Board of Supervisors. PORA also has provided access to legislative contacts, a draft letter to which can be printed and mailed directly, and documentation to assist the public. PORA BNSF Committee representatives have been at various events throughout SCW and surrounding communities sharing these letters and providing information. Roughly 800 opposition letters have been submitted from PORA and 3,000 total opposition letters to the Board of Supervisors.

The PORA Board held a meeting with Maricopa County Board of Supervisor Debbie Lesko and expressed their concern at that meeting. A resolution enacted by the PORA board was established.

Due to there being unanswered questions and a lack of undocumented evidence, the PORA BNSF committee and the board met with 6 BNSF representatives on July 30th. PORA emphatically expressed their opposition to the project.

As representative of PORA and the committee, I was able to be on the radio program Community Chit Chat, with Ron Capriatti, KSCW, and share information about our concerns effecting Sun City West. This was aired twice by KSCW.

As of this date, the Board of Supervisors is scheduled to vote on zoning changes and a comprehensive plan amendment on November 5th. This is contingent on BNSF completing required applications and the Maricopa County Planning and Development approving such applications, in order to go before the Board of Supervisors. While the Committee is not opposed to rail, or development in general, we are concerned about location. 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. There may be better-suited locations for a project of this magnitude, and we believe the people of the West Valley deserve a voice in shaping the future of our neighborhoods. Construction could begin in late 2025, with operations beginning in 2028. BNSF has stated they will claim the preemption rule in order to proceed with the intermodal phase of the project regardless of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors vote. What can the public do? You can become informed by reading information regarding BNSF, become aware of Community Concerns, write to Supervisor Debbie Lesko and the other Board of Supervisors, write to your Legislators, and others as listed in the Legislative Contacts document on porascw.org

Discussion: Tom Jones discussed how railroads had federal preemptive rights since the 1800s for rail only, not for the Logistics Park and buildings. That is rezoned by Maricopa County. www.Maricopa.gov/contactLesko

A question about Online signatures vs hard copies was asked and will be researched.

BNSF information is constantly being sent to the Rec. center.

Access to the Hospital. Does Fire & Medical get information if the train blocks it? DeeDee Runner will research.

Question: Do we have budget for BIG SIGNS—discussion stating the sign size restriction by RHJ.

Discussion: 15 trains at 6,189 feet long are 1 ¼ miles long. Spurs on 303 and Northern could be an alternative route.

We need to check the new Grand and 303 off-ramps with Transportation.

A suggestion was made to see if the BNSF committee could request environmental studies for hazmat studies. The committee will follow up.

Discussion: Does Wittman use Banner Hospital for medical? Yes

5 Supervisors of Maricopa County vote on the rezoning for logistics.

TRANSIT COMMITTEE: PORA liaison: Cindy Putman

Members of the committee joined: Sharon Hettick, Allie Wisniewski, Kathy Chandler

WATER COMMITTEE: David Hunter, chair, spoke about fugitive water, Toilet to tap, and draining pool into wastewater.

Question: Are we sinking? David Hunter responded that a section by Luke sank 17 feet 50 years ago, but there is very little subsidence now. Our aquifer is in good shape.

PORA Ralph Johnson spoke about the history of PORA and said that PORA created the Posse, Prides, Helping Hands, and the Foundation. PORA also opposed a factory from being built due to fumes, and de-annexed from Dysart schools.

Question: Who is the Government Committee?

Ralph Johnson answered that it was himself and David Hunter.

Three new people have volunteered to join the committee. This will be announced next week.

The next open meeting of PORA will be on December 15th at 2 PM.

Next BNSF Committee meeting is Sept 23 at PORA at 1 PM

Next Transit Committee meeting is Sept 23 at PORA at 12:30

Next Roads and Traffic meeting is Sept 24 at PORA at 1:30