



Nadaburg Unified School District No. 81

Quality Education: Every Student! Every Day!

32919 Center Street, Wittmann, AZ 85361

Office: (623) 250.7746

www.nadaburgsd.org

**Dr. Aspasia
Angelou**
Superintendent

Tricia Farrington
Executive
Administrative
Assistant to the
Superintendent

Holly Diaz
Chief of Staff

Tyler Moore
Interim Director
of Business
Services

Governing Board

Matt Varitek
President

Deborah Parris
Vice President

**Dr. Valarie
Serrano**
Member

Sandy Jordan
Member

Nancy Sanchez
Member

July 09, 2025

Supervisor Debbie Lesko and Members of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
301 W. Jefferson Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

RE: Opposition to BNSF Intermodal Facility Adjacent to Nadaburg Elementary School Due to Documented Health and Safety Risks

Dear Supervisor Lesko and Honorable Members of the Board,

On behalf of Nadaburg Unified School District No. 81, we strongly urge the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to reject the proposed siting of a Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Intermodal Facility across from Nadaburg Elementary School and the NUSD District Office in Wittmann, Arizona. This project poses serious, evidence-based health and safety risks to our students, staff, and surrounding families.

1. Air Quality Risks to Children: Evidence from Intermodal Health Impact Data

The Baltimore-Washington Intermodal Facility Health Impact Assessment (2013), one of the nation's most comprehensive reviews of freight hub health consequences, found that the introduction of intermodal truck and rail traffic will substantially worsen local air quality. Key findings include:

- The annual exposure to PM2.5 (particulate matter <2.5 microns) increased by up to 0.8 µg/m³ in nearby residential areas as a direct result of truck and train traffic.
- This increase correlates to 10 excess deaths per 100,000 residents annually from chronic exposure to air pollution near the facility.
- The impacted area had significantly higher rates of asthma, bronchitis, and chronic lower respiratory diseases than neighboring communities.

Applying these findings to Wittmann is urgent and logical. Nadaburg Elementary School would lie directly within the exposure zone, meaning daily recess, arrival/dismissal times, and outdoor physical education activities would place hundreds of children in proximity to toxic diesel particulates and idling freight emissions.

2. Vulnerable Children at Higher Risk: Environmental Injustice

Children are disproportionately vulnerable to PM2.5 and diesel pollutants due to their smaller airways and faster respiration rates. According to the CDC, long-term exposure in school-aged children increases:

- Asthma attacks and ER visits
- Impaired lung development
- Long-term risks for cardiovascular disease and cancer

Locating a freight terminal across from a public school in a medically underserved area amplifies this inequity.

3. Hazmat Transport Risks: Lethal Potential in an Accident

Intermodal rail and truck hubs frequently carry chemicals such as chlorine gas, sulfur dioxide, anhydrous ammonia, and hydrochloric acid. In the event of a derailment, rupture, or spill near the school, children could be exposed to substances that:

- Cause fatal lung damage within minutes (chlorine gas)
- Induce severe respiratory distress (sulfur dioxide)
- Burn mucous membranes and skin (ammonia, sodium hydroxide)

4. Noise, Sleep Disruption, and Learning Impairment

Children in areas surrounding intermodal hubs have also been found to experience:

- Chronic exposure to noise above 83 dBA (the decibel level of a semi-truck at 35 mph)
- Decreased attention span, reading comprehension, and sleep quality
- Cognitive and memory deficits

5. Safety and Zoning Violations for a School Community

The intermodal site would increase daily heavy truck traffic on Center Street and Patton Road, directly overlapping with bus routes, parent drop-off lanes, and student walkers. No intermodal facility of this scale in the U.S. is known to be sited within 100 yards of a functioning K–8 public school.

Conclusion and Action Requested

Given the documented risks to public health, especially to children:

- Do not permit construction of the BNSF Intermodal Station adjacent to Nadaburg Elementary School.
- Require an Arizona Health Impact Assessment (HIA) modeled after the 2013 Baltimore-Washington study before any permits are issued.
- Initiate community forums and environmental reviews with families, tribal partners, school personnel, and rural health experts.

This is not a matter of routine development—it is a matter of protecting children from quantifiable, preventable, and disproportionate harm.

Thank you for your leadership and for defending the safety of our most vulnerable residents.

With deep respect,



Dr. Aspasia Angelou
Superintendent
Nadaburg Unified School District No. 81

Enclosures:

- Summary Table: Toxic Chemical Hazards Near Schools
- Excerpts: Baltimore-Washington Intermodal Facility Health Impact Assessment