

OTHER VOICES: Moodyville air quality study warrants closer look

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

If you had just read the North Shore News headline [Moodyville Air Study Shows Clean Results \(http://www.nsnews.com/news/moodyville-air-study-shows-clean-results-1.2245981\)](http://www.nsnews.com/news/moodyville-air-study-shows-clean-results-1.2245981) (May 4 front page) and seen the mayor's declaration that the mobile air monitoring unit "showed air quality in Moodyville was very similar to other areas in Metro Vancouver and below the levels it needed to be," one might deduce that whether you lived in the backyard of the port or you were snuggled up against the mountains in Grouse Woods, we were all breathing the same beautiful mountain fresh North Shore air.

The news story and the mayor's platitudes are largely based on three of the four key points gleaned from the executive summary of the report. Yes, the monitoring study showed that pollutant levels in Moodyville were below Metro Vancouver's air quality objectives and levels of carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ground level ozone, fine particulate matter and black carbon were similar to other areas. Finally, Moodyville did register higher levels of inhalable particulates during the air quality advisory due to forest fires for a short time in August.

However, what the story downplayed but is most concerning for the neighbourhood is that, after the smoke had cleared, the MAMU detected "generally higher monthly concentration averages of inhalable particulate matter compared to other network stations" (Metro Van Report, page 21).

The report concludes that the higher levels were due to a combination of local construction, road dust and industrial emissions. And while Roger Quan of Metro Vancouver cautioned in the North Shore News that the science behind measuring the coal content in these inhalable particulates is not perfect, the mere fact that coal levels are elevated is significant and should not be glossed over, especially when the per cent of individual particles were never less than 34 per cent in the coarse sample and as high as 94 per cent in the fine particulate matter.

Experts in the public health field have warned that any level of exposure is far from benign, having some impact on the risk of heart and lung disease and other ill health effects. According to Dr. Michael Brauer, professor at the School of Population and Public Health at UBC's Faculty of Medicine, coal export environmental impact assessments generally rely on the flawed assumption that there are safe levels of exposure to these pollutants below which no impact will occur.

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- [Moodyville air study shows clean results \(/news/moodyville-air-study-shows-clean-results-1.2245981\)](/news/moodyville-air-study-shows-clean-results-1.2245981)

In Brauer's assessment of the Moodyville air quality study, he says, "the neighbourhood is not unusually poor or unusually clean, although there is clearly some influence of marine vessels and industrial activities more generally and some influence of the coal dust specifically that would not be seen in other areas."

He goes on to say that "while the 'coarse' particulate matter produced from mechanical processes is generally less hazardous, it is certainly not completely benign compared to particles from combustion sources." While Brauer assures that the overall air quality is good, he recommends the community continue to advocate for measures to reduce the local impacts from industrial sources and associated activities, including ships and the coal terminal itself.

As the resident of Moodyville who arranged for the MAMU to be deployed on our street, long before the City of North Vancouver council became involved through the Low Level Road Committee, it is my hope for the few long-term residents and the 4,000 new ones moving in that they will not tolerate the mayor's cherry picking of the study's results to suit his redevelopment agenda.

The residents will need to use this vital data to continue to fight for a cleaner airshed. After all, they will have been sold on a new sustainable community in which they do not expect to breathe in the diesel and coal dust from the port while they furiously wash it off their carbon neutral townhouse decks.

Barbara Taylor
North Vancouver

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Moodyville air study shows clean results

Pollution levels below targets in port neighbourhoods, report finds

[Brent Richter](#) | North Shore News

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In April 2014, Geoff Doerksen, Metro Vancouver air quality planner, set up the mobile air monitoring unit, or MAMU, on Second Street in Moodyville. The MAMU measured various forms of air pollution coming from Port Metro Vancouver and Low Level Road. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

Residents in Moodyville can (probably) breathe easy.

A long-awaited study into the port-sidled neighbourhood's air quality has found pollution levels below Metro Vancouver's targets in almost every case.

Metro Vancouver parked its pollution-sniffing Mobile Air Monitoring Unit (commonly referred to as MAMU) on East Second Street off and on for nine months between April 2014 and February 2015 to measure carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ground-level ozone, fine particulate matter, inhalable particulate matter and black carbon.

The study was designed to establish some baseline measures of pollutants coming from the Port of Vancouver's terminals, train engines, tankers and the Low Level Road before expansions of Neptune Terminals, Richardson International and Cargill Canada came online.

Carbon monoxide peaked at 1,250 parts per billion, well below metro's objective of 26,500. Sulphur dioxide, which comes from exhaust of oceangoing ships, averaged 1.4 ppb annually. Metro's objective is to keep that level below 12.

The one exception was for inhalable particulate. For six hours in August 2014, the MAMU detected 52.1 micrograms of particulate per cubic metre, compared to Metro's objective of 50. At that time, however, the region was under an air quality advisory thanks to forest fires burning outside the Lower Mainland.

"What we saw at Moodyville was the same thing we saw across the region but there was an indication of it being a little bit higher than some of the other stations across the region. We believe that was the impact of local sources. There was construction going on. There are industrial emissions in the area," said Roger Quan, Metro's director of air quality and climate change.

Coal was detected amid the fine and coarse particulate samples at varying percentages, but Quan cautioned that the study wasn't tailored to provide a precise quantitative measure.

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- [Moodyville Air Quality Report \(http://prod-admin1.glacier.atex.cniweb.net:8080/filesserver/file/879069/filename/moodyville air quality study.pdf\)](#)

City of North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto said he was happy to see the results. "I think people raised some valid concerns in the past about living that close to an industrial port, with the grain, with the railway, with the potash and coal piles, and they wanted to know it was safe there," he said. "So we brought the MAMU in for a year and it showed the air quality in that area was very similar to other areas in Metro Vancouver and it was below the levels they needed to be."

Tony Valente, former chairman of the city's now-defunct Low Level Road and port area community liaison committee, which originally lobbied for the MAMU, also welcomed the study's publication.

"On the coal side, there's probably still some questions but all in all, I think 'What a great thing.' You have some independent information that is a pretty good outcome. It complies with Metro Vancouver for the most part. ... I don't know why it was so difficult to get the information in the first place. ... I hope it brings a lot of calm to folks."

While many port expansion projects are complete, Valente said Metro Vancouver should watch air quality from its permanent monitoring stations in Mahon Park, Horseshoe Bay and Maplewood.

Still one massive terminal project has yet to be approved. G3 has applied to build a rail loop and 48 silos capable of holding 180,000 tonnes of grain at the foot of Brooksbank Avenue, something the city has been keeping a close eye on, Mussatto said.

"We want to make sure that any changes at the port can work alongside residents who are already living there. We sent those concerns off to (the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority) and G3. I understand they're in the process of responding to them and I'm hoping when it comes back, they'll going to be able to address all those concerns."

The elevator and silo technology proposed for G3 is much more advanced than the existing terminals on the waterfront, Mussatto noted. City staff toured a similar facility in Washington State and were "quite impressed" with what they saw, he said.

"I'm hoping, on balance, it's a benefit to the area," he said.

The port authority's decision on G3's application is due in late spring or early summer.

 [Moodyville Air Quality Report \(http://prod-admin1.glacier.atex.cniweb.net:8080/filesserver/file/879069/filename/moodyville air quality study.pdf\)](#)