

July 24, 2015
L Hon. Alejandro García Padilla
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Governor Garcia Padilla:

As you are aware, the people of Vieques have been suffering from inadequate ferry service for decades. While this has led to major inconveniences, interruption of tourism (our only industry), and suppression of new business formation (jobs), it has also been contributing to the major health problems on the island and poses a direct catastrophic threat to our safety.

As you will see in the following presentation, the location of the cargo ferry dock causes heavily laden trucks with fuel and building materials to drive through the narrow streets of Isabel Segunda and cross a bridge *at the water's edge* that is safety rated by DTOP at a third of the weight of these trucks. Immediate action should be taken to move the cargo ferry to the Rompeolas as promised years ago to avoid a potential calamity, environmental damage, and continuing adverse health effects of the harmful diesel exhaust.

Money is not the problem, priorities are: any cost associated with improvements at the piers will quickly be compensated for by running the short route using 65% less fuel per trip. The dirty little secret of how we are being recklessly endangered is about to reach daylight.

On behalf of the citizens of Vieques, I request that you immediately jump onto the right side of this issue and make our safety a priority. Do what you and your predecessors have been promising for years: implement the short route for the cargo ferry before it's too late.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Public Opinion: Cargo Ferry Operations in Isabel Segunda

There has been much discussion about moving the ATM cargo ferry operation to Mosquito Pier. We have all heard many good reasons for the move, but as of yet, not a single good reason to keep it in Isabel Segunda. There are reasons of convenience, practicality, and economics, but, above all, safety for the move:

1. The roads of Isabel Segunda become blocked and jammed every time the cargo ferry unloads as trucks depart and arrive via the small, crowded streets.
2. Significant damage to municipal and other properties occurs as heavy and oversized vehicles destroy the local streets and impact signs, poles, and fences, not to mention cars, as they try to navigate the narrow roadways.
3. Space used for storing and maneuvering the vehicles using the cargo ferry could instead be used to help alleviate some of the parking shortage for the passenger ferry riders.
4. Most of the big trucks are actually destined to locations outside of town where the larger stores and gas stations are located.
5. Every politician for over 10 years has been telling us that they were working on getting the short route approved citing the economic savings, shorter rides, etc., so we now all know there is money and time to be saved if it were implemented.

Safety and Public Health

6. Every local resident knows that respiratory ailments in Vieques are rampant. Some want to blame the Navy, but studies everywhere show that diesel fumes contain very harmful and toxic particulate that is responsible for increased cancer levels and other afflictions. Due to strong political opposition by trucking interests, there is no real regulation of the air quality emissions from trucks. Young children are very susceptible to adverse health effects of such exposure. So why would any authority representing this community force all of these trucks (including tankers full of gasoline) down the narrow streets of our town and passed three schools as they make it to their delivery points? All know there is an alternative.
7. The only practical route from the ferry dock to points outside town brings the traffic across the bridge immediately west of the dock. This bridge was inspected and tested by DTOP engineers several years ago and was given a weight limit safety rating of 15 tons. Many of the trucks that deliver the needed supplies to us have **empty** weights approaching or exceeding these gross weight limits. A fuel tanker (with 9000 gallons of fuel weighing approximately 30 tons) weighs 3 times the rated limit. 4 Axle material supply trucks, construction trucks, and others also greatly exceed the limits daily. I asked the head of DTOP (Miguel Torres) about this in early 2013 during one of his visits, and he said that he was aware of the issue and that they were working on trying to get the short route for cargo ASAP, which he said would be completed in 2014. There appears to be NO progress on the short route any more.

It would be a disaster for the community should a bridge fail or a tanker accident should occur in town or near a school. But even the chance of such an event or the long term dangers of diesel pollution creating health issues for our children creates an indefensible position for a manager or elected official. How does one defend this position? No governor, mayor, ATM Board member, or other decision maker will escape liability, because they are ALL aware of the issue and had the opportunity to demand changes, but didn't. **This is reckless endangerment of our citizens by government.**