DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	26-ALT-01
Project Title:	2026-2027 Investment Plan Update for the Clean Transportation Program
TN #:	270002
Document Title:	Dolphin Smart Ships Comments - Public Comment – Clean Transportation Program FY 26-27 Advisory Committee Meeting
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Dolphin Smart Ships
Submitter Role:	Other Interested Person
Submission Date:	5/15/2026 12:35:52 PM
Docketed Date:	5/15/2026

Comment Received From: Dolphin Smart Ships
Submitted On: 5/15/2026
Docket Number: 26-ALT-01

Public Comment â€“ Clean Transportation Program FY 26-27 Advisory Committee Meeting

My name is Eric Baliantz, and I am the founder of Dolphin Smart Ships, a company developing the West Coast's first battery-electric short-sea container service on the M-580 marine highway corridor, connecting the Port of Oakland to inland Central California ports including the Port of Stockton.

I wanted to briefly raise an idea I hope the Commission would be open to exploring further as part of its FY 26-27 investment priorities.

Our system is built around swappable battery-electric containers, which are modular, high-capacity energy storage units that power zero-emission vessel propulsion. What makes this architecture particularly compelling from a clean energy systems perspective is its dual-use potential: these same battery containers could function as distributed grid assets, deployable to communities during power outages or grid stress events. As California faces increasing wildfire-related grid disruptions, a mobile, marine-deployable battery fleet represents a resilience asset that goes beyond transportation decarbonization alone.

From a Clean Transportation Program alignment standpoint, our project addresses freight sector emissions, reduces truck traffic on I-80 and I-580 (both federally designated as significantly congested corridors with no capacity to absorb additional freight volume), and advances zero-emission marine highway infrastructure on an underutilized federal route.

We are targeting an initial operational launch by January 2027 using a chartered tug and barge, with a planned transition to purpose-built battery-electric vessels as financing matures. We are actively exploring partnerships with port authorities and freight operators in the region.

I would welcome the opportunity to connect with CEC staff to explore whether this project aligns with current or upcoming funding opportunities under the Clean Transportation Program. I can be reached at ebaliantz@berkeley.edu or (650) 892-0692.
Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Eric
Eric Baliantz
Assistant Professor
Department of Marine Transportation
USCG licensed Master Mariner, unlimited tonnage
GSR at Center for Environmental Public Policy, UC Berkeley

DOLPHIN SMART SHIPS

DOLPHIN SMART SHIPS is developing the West Coast's first battery-electric short-sea container service — connecting inland ports via zero-emission marine highways to reduce freight emissions and highway congestion.

HIGHWAY GRIDLOCK I-80 and I-580 are officially designated "significantly congested" by the Federal Highway Administration, with no capacity to absorb additional freight volume.

OUR VISION expands the success of the M-580 into a comprehensive national strategy to operationalize zero-emission vessels across the entire U.S. Marine Highway network. From the M-5 on the West Coast to the M-95 on the Atlantic, we are connecting every major corridor—including the Great Lakes and Inland Rivers—into a sustainable, multimodal freight system. For cargo owners, this means access to a lower-emission shipping option that supports decarbonization goals, reduces congestion-driven costs, and unlocks greater capacity across high-volume trade lanes. Moving freight by water moves more for less—and with a cleaner footprint.

OUR PHASED APPROACH We launch on the M-580 with a chartered tug and barge — proven, low-cost, and operational by January 2027.

NO ALTERNATIVE EXISTS There is currently no short-sea freight option between the Port of Oakland and inland Central California. That is the gap we are building to fill.

AS VOLUME AND FINANCING MATURE, we transition to purpose-built battery-electric vessels, merging the power of AI and robotics. The route comes first. The revolution follows.

Interested in zero-emission short-sea freight?

We are currently exploring partnerships with freight operators, port authorities, and cargo owners ahead of our 2027 launch. We welcome conversations.

Capt. Eric Baliantz

ebaliantz@berkeley.edu
(650) 892-0692