

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington DC, 20590

Dear Administrator Bose,

Following several train derailments and subsequent public health incidents, we are writing to urge your agency to complete a thorough assessment of the safety measures in place to ensure that similar events do not occur in the Chicago area, given that the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) recent decision to approve the merger between Canadian Pacific (CP) and Kansas City Southern (KCS) railroads will increase train traffic going through suburban Chicago.

On March 30, yet another train derailment of twenty-two freight rail cars carrying multiple substances, including ethanol, caused a mass evacuation of nearby residents in Raymond, Minnesota.¹ Four of the cars carrying ethanol, a highly flammable compound commonly carried on cross-national freight rails, caught fire and continued to burn for more than 14 hours, with additional cars containing ethanol being at risk of also igniting.² Exposure to burning ethanol is known to cause severe headaches, nausea, irritation of the skin, and sickness.³

As you know, this is not an isolated event. In February, Norfolk Southern Railroad cars derailed near East Palestine, Ohio, eleven of which were carrying hazardous materials.⁴ The devastating effects of this derailment will be felt by the neighboring residents for years to come, with the hazardous spill contaminating at least 15,000 pounds of soil and 1.1 million gallons of water.⁵

In addition, on March 26, multiple freight cars of a CP train derailed on Metra's Milwaukee District West line (MD-W) in Franklin Park, Illinois in suburban Chicago.⁶ To consider these events simply incidental to train traffic is to ignore the safety of millions of people living in the surrounding areas. Luckily, no hazardous

¹ Marlene Lenthag, Train carrying ethanol derails and catches fire in Minnesota, forcing residents to evacuate, NBC News, (March 30, 2023), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/train-carrying-ethanol-derails-catches-fire-sparking-evacuation-reside-rcna77363>

² Holly Yan, Tina Burnside, Ella Nilson, Carroll Alvorado, A blaze still burns after a train carrying highly flammable ethanol derailed in Minnesota. Crews are assessing 3 more cars carrying ethanol, CNN, (March 30, 2023), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/30/us/ramond-minnesota-train-derailment/index.html>

³ New Jersey Department of Health, Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet: Ethanol, (October 2010)

⁴ Simon Ducroquet et al., Here's What the Derailed Ohio Train Was Carrying - and What Was Burned, The Washington Post, (Feb.18, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/02/18/ohio-train-derailment-visual-timeline/>.

⁵ Li Cohen, Ohio Train Derailment Contaminated at Least 15,000 Pounds of Soil and 1.1 Million Gallons of Water, Norfolk Southern Says, CBS News, (Feb. 20, 2023), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ohio-train-derailment-contaminated-soil-water-norfolk-southern-says-east-palestine/>.

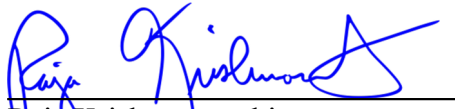
⁶ Canadian Pacific freight train cars derail in Franklin Park, Chicago Sun-Times, (March 26, 2023), <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/3/26/23657483/canadian-pacific-freight-train-cars-derail-in-franklin-park-safety-transportation>

materials were released in Franklin Park; however, following the STB's decision to approve the CPKC merger, CP freight traffic is projected to at least quadruple on the MD-W line that runs through heavily populated suburban communities from Elgin to Bensenville on the route to downtown Chicago. The increased train traffic will bring almost 11,000 additional carloads of hazardous materials through the communities a year,⁷ and we fear that what has happened in East Palestine and Raymond will happen in Elgin or Roselle.


We have raised our concerns with the STB regarding the safety impacts of CPKC's projected increase transport of hazardous materials, however, they have not been addressed fully. Therefore, we strongly urge you to thoroughly analyze the current safety measures and additional mitigation in the STB's final decision, including CP's Safety Integration Plan, to determine whether the proper mitigation is in place to ensure communities in the Chicago area do not face the same fate as those in East Palestine and Raymond.

Thank you for your attention. Please respond by April 24.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress

⁷ Surface Transportation Board, Canadian Pacific Acquisition of Kansas City Southern Final Environmental Impact Statement, C-19, (Jan. 27, 2023).