

JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER  
3RD DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



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September 6, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Ms. Sarah Feinberg, Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Ms. Marie Therese Dominguez, Administrator  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Secretary Foxx and Administrators Dominguez and Feinberg:

On June 3, 2016, an issue of great interest and concern to the people of my district covering Southwest Washington was put in stark relief when we witnessed the derailment of an oil train carrying Bakken Crude Oil in Mosier, Oregon. Although far less catastrophic than it could have been, the derailment highlighted the need for strong safety measures to address shipments of volatile and hazardous commodities through the Columbia River Gorge—whether related, or unrelated to oil shipments. Subsequently, I am writing to request information on dispersing tank cars carrying oil, or other hazardous materials, with non-volatile products throughout trains. As you know, there are currently trains moving through Pacific Northwest communities that carry continuous blocks of tank cars loaded with crude oil. I am very concerned that loading trains with consecutive blocks of oil-filled cars, one after another, is only increasing the risks associated with derailments.

I request your responses to the following questions:

- Have agencies studied whether or not continuous blocks of tank cars carrying oil increases the risks of combustion?
- Have agencies conducted analyses on the potential benefits of requiring disbursement of cars carrying these flammable materials with non-volatile commodities throughout a train, in order to reduce the risks of combustion in derailments or incidents?
- Have the agencies conducted analyses for a recommended ratio of disbursement of volatile to non-volatile rail car commodities to reduce the risk of combustion in the event of a derailment or incident? How would this ratio be affected by the use of the DOT-117 tank cars?
- Have you seen this modeled in the U.S. or elsewhere?
- Have agencies studied whether or not reducing speeds permitted for oil trains would mitigate the risks of combustion?

Thank you for your attention to these matters. I look forward to receiving your responses.

Sincerely,

Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress