



SPOKANE CITY COUNCIL
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201-3335
(509) 625-6255

Ben Stuckart
Council President

June 6, 2016

Spokane City Council statement on Oil Train accident in Mosier, OR

In light of the recent oil train derailment in Mosier, Oregon, the City of Spokane must again address the issue of shipping Bakken crude oil through the Inland Northwest and its waterways. There have been at least 26 oil train derailments or spills in North America over the last 10 years. Several of these have resulted in deaths, and all of them represent an untenable risk to human safety and our environment.

According to the Mosier Fire Chief, this derailment could have resulted in catastrophic fires had the wind speeds been at their usual levels. We can't rely on this kind of good fortune. We must expect the worst, and plan accordingly.

Here in Spokane, an accident just like the one in Mosier could cripple the entire region. Nearly half a million people rely on the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer for their daily drinking water. Our aquifer is one of the shallowest and fastest-moving bodies of groundwater in North America. Even a relatively small oil spill like the one in Mosier could spread throughout the aquifer in a matter of hours, compromising dozens of wells and leaving thousands without drinking water. In addition to spills, an explosion or oil fire would be devastating anywhere in our downtown corridor.

Over the weekend, the Mayor and City Council of Mosier passed a resolution requesting that Union Pacific stop running trains until all of the crude oil and hazardous debris from the derailment is cleaned up and thoroughly inspected. Instead of honoring this request from the local community, Union Pacific resumed running trains through the Columbia River Gorge on Sunday night. This is unacceptable. We in Spokane stand with the city of Mosier and support their reasonable request for a temporary halt in train traffic. Under 49 U.S.C. 5121(d), the United States Department of Transportation has the authority to declare an emergency prohibition of future oil train shipments through Mosier until it is proven to be safe. If the railroad refuses to put the legitimate safety concerns of communities like Mosier ahead of the interests of oil companies, we as representatives of our community must take action.



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In 2014 Spokane was the first city on the West Coast to pass a resolution calling for tougher federal and state rules regarding Oil Trains. It's time for us to speak out once again.

Council Members Lori Kinnear and Breean Beggs, along with Council President Ben Stuckart are co-sponsoring a ballot measure asking for some common-sense protections for the City of Spokane and the surrounding communities. It is our hope that through this measure, we can collectively demand that our state and federal governments stop prioritizing the economic expedience of a select few over the health, safety, and environmental concerns of us all.

In addition to the upcoming initiative to be on the ballot in November 2016 we are asking for Governor Inslee and Senators Murray and Cantwell to work to immediately halt Bakken Crude through Spokane and the River Gorge until North Dakota and the railroad can ensure our citizens that the product is safe.

Tonight, the City Council will consider suspending the rules and discuss a resolution calling on Union Pacific to halt traffic through Mosier until the current oil tanks and remaining environmental disaster are cleaned up and the cause of the derailment is determined.

The Spokane City Council, along with community members will participate in a community forum on June 29th to further discuss the ballot measure and other strategies to create a safer Spokane.

Oil Train Community Safety Forum

Wednesday, June 29th, 7pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort George Wright Drive.

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For contact call Ben Stuckart at (509) 625-6255