



Legislation Text

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A MOTION related to: petroleum transport by rail through King County; an updated emergency management plan to specifically address the risk from increased transport of Bakken formation petroleum transport by rail; and railroad company partnership to identify and mitigate risks, and to jointly plan and train for an emergency response.

WHEREAS, the region's railway network is fundamental to King County's manufacturing and shipping economy, and is an environmentally responsible method of moving passengers and freight, and

WHEREAS, new technologies have resulted in the production of historic amounts of domestic and foreign petroleum, which will significantly increase the volume of petroleum and petroleum products moving by rail through Washington, and

WHEREAS, the state of Washington is a destination for petroleum produced in western states, due to its refining capacity and proximity to shipping infrastructure, and

WHEREAS, the volume of petroleum-by-rail moving through King County to petroleum refineries in northwestern Washington is expected to triple to over one million barrels per week, and

WHEREAS, the primary source of the petroleum anticipated to be transported by rail through King County is from the Bakken formation, which the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration has warned is more explosive than traditional crude oil, and

WHEREAS, rail companies operating in Washington state are committed to the safe transport of commodities and freight, and according to the Federal Railroad Administration in 2013 had one of their safest

operating years in history despite growing volume of cargo, and

WHEREAS, the rail lines that carry petroleum run through King County's rural and urban cities, our neighborhoods and parks, business and industrial areas, near schools, sporting arenas and stadiums, through our mountain passes, atop our watersheds and along our waterfront, rivers and other natural areas, and

WHEREAS, rail traffic also moves beneath downtown Seattle in an underground tunnel with no fire protection systems and limited emergency egress or ventilation, and

WHEREAS, as illustrated by the 2013 derailment of an oil carrying train in Quebec and other communities, derailments, spills and fires can have catastrophic impacts on communities, their residents and the environment, and

WHEREAS, rail companies operating in Washington state have demonstrated a willingness and desire to partner with local governments and emergency response agencies to prepare for any possible emergency, and

WHEREAS, King County is concerned about the threat to life, safety, our regional economy and the environment from potential spills and fires resulting from the transport of petroleum by rail and the need to plan and prepare for a potential emergency, and

WHEREAS, the current Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan does not specifically address the unique risks associated with rail transport of petroleum products, including Bakken formation crude;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The council requests that the office of emergency management, in consultation with local governments, emergency response entities and rail companies operating in the state of Washington, review and update the county's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to specifically address the risk from increased transport of petroleum by rail, as soon as is practicable, but in no event, later than March 1, 2015. The update shall be named the Annex to the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The development of the annex shall include a needs assessment report, which shall be transmitted to the council by October 31, 2014. The needs assessment report shall assess the county's capability and resources available to respond to an

oil train fire. Both the needs assessment and Annex to the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan shall be filed in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the lead staff for the transportation, economy, and environment committee or its successor.

B. The council further requests that the office of emergency management explore coordinating and conducting multijurisdiction emergency preparedness training activities in conjunction with the Washington state Department of Ecology, the Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the United States Coast Guard, local governments, emergency response entities and rail companies operating in the state of Washington.

C. The council strongly urges rail companies operating in the state of Washington to share with emergency management agencies and first responders the following, so that the state and local communities can be fully informed of and plan for the risks posed by the transport of petroleum by rail: types of petroleum, petroleum products and petroleum derivatives; transportation routes; the frequency and duration of transfers of petroleum; and efforts and actions to ensure the safe transport of such commodities.