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STB Meeting on Railroad Hazmat Transport Issues

Ethanol Off-Loading Facilities Involving Rail

I am writing this to encourage STB to work with Congress in changing the laws regarding the Railroad and Ethanol Off-loading facilities

I live in Alexandria, Virginia and just recently found out that an Ethanol Off-loading facility is operation across the street from my townhouse. I also found out that our Fire Dept was not prepared and had not been notified of this facility. For 7 weeks, we were all sitting ducks. We are lucky that nothing went wrong. What I have found over the last several weeks talking to various Federal Agencies is that citizens have no rights when it comes to the Railroad. I have a problem with this. I don't have a problem with the transporting of chemicals through our cities across America but I do have a problem with Ethanol be off-loaded in a Residential area – an elementary school being within a 1000 feet of the facility. I also have a problem with them storing the Ethanol overnight and over the weekends in the train cars, not having adequate security, and not being informed that the facility was going to be here. I have always felt safe but now I do not. I also am concerned the long-term effect of this facility such as my house decreasing in value. I would not buy in an area that had a facility across the street. This is my retirement – what happens if it is devalued or lost in an accident?

How is it that a Railroad company can build and operate such a facility in such close proximity to an Elementary School and residents? Norfolk Southern has already been cited for being at fault for the Beaver Creek, PA incident. The Federal Railroad Administration has determined that they placed unnecessary risk onto surrounding residents. Have they not done that again to us in Alexandria? I believe that they do not care that they place Children, families, homes, businesses, etc at risk as long as they benefit. I find this appalling. This needs to not happen to any other community in the United States.

I strongly encourage you to work with Congress to get a law passed to protect residents from having an Ethanol facility being built in a residential area. Currently, new facilities are being built in heavy industrial areas and not residential areas – Alexandria is the first. So, as we look more and more to alternate fuels and the demand for Ethanol becomes greater, Residential areas across the country may become the new locations. That being the case, the citizens need to have some rights.

Here are some suggestions as to what we should have:

- 1 Required disclosure of intent to build and operate an Ethanol Off-loading facility (this did not occur in Alexandria. Metro, surrounding businesses, surrounding residents, the Elementary school, and the Fire Department were not informed of Norfolk Southern's intention to open an Ethanol Offloading facility)
- 2 Facility should be specified distant away from elementary or any other school
- 3 Facility should be specified distant away from Residential area
- 4 Fire Department needs to have adequate training and equipment before said facility can become operational
- 5 Evacuation plan should be in place before said facility can become operational
- 6 Adequate security needs to be in place
- 7 Homeland Security should evaluate the facility and its' location to ensure does not become a possible terrorist target
- 8 Storage of Ethanol should be stored overnight and weekends in the proper containers and not

railroad cars

We all pay taxes and the citizens should have a right to not have one of these facilities to be sprung on them without any communication, adequate equipment and fire department training and definitely not located near an elementary school or any school for that matter. These items should be in place before we have a serious catastrophe involving an Lthanol I facility and the surrounding area.

Please help future communities from living in fear of losing their homes, possibly their lives, or the value of their homes. This is a right that I should have as a tax paying citizen.