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Sent: Friday, January 15, 2016 3:21 PM
To: PSC_UtilityComment
Subject: Railroad Safety Issues in Miles City, Montana

January 15, 2016

Dear Public Service Commissioners:

Last July, 2015, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Company (BNSF) decided to increase train speeds through Miles City to 60 mph. The local high school is within 100 yards of the railroad bridge on Main Street. This is a very dangerous situation. A BNSF train going 28 mph derailed in Miles City at the 10th Street crossing in 2005, which is within 100 yards of the Miles City Emergency Operating Center and the Custer County Courthouse. Fortunately, at that time there were no injuries primarily because only coal cars were involved. A BNSF representative was quoted in one of the Montana newspapers saying "we dodged at bullet." However, it would have been a very different story if oil tankers were involved in that incident.

There have been 10 oil train explosions in 2014 and 2015 -- many involving upgraded oil tank cars. New tank oil rail cars rupture at 12 mph. "Safer" DOT 117 oil tank cars are only puncture proof at speeds up to 12 mph.

So, far attempts to get the trains slowed down have been unsuccessful. Senator Tester wrote BNSF expressing concern and their response was that the tracks have been upgraded and meet legal requirements. But trains derail for many reasons. By the way, Senator Tester received a \$35,000 campaign contribution from the railroads in 2012; Senator Daines got \$25,000 from BNSF and Congressman Daines got \$17,000. (Source: Opensecrets.org)

I'm told that the nearest BNSF rail disaster response team is located in Havre, Montana and is 6 hours away from Miles City.

I think BNSF should place a rail disaster response team in Miles City. It may be expensive but since the railroads have money to spend on political contributions, they also should have the money to ensure the safety of citizens of rural communities. The Miles City Fire Department would not be able to handle a disaster of the magnitude of exploding oil tanker rail cars. It would be a major catastrophe in Miles City. I know the new head of the Federal Railroad Administration has expressing concerns about this issue as it affects many communities around the United States.

The trains are required to slow in communities of 100,000 or more people. However, the citizens of rural Montana are not being afforded the same safety protections that citizens of larger communities are being shown. This is not equal protection under the law.

In 2014 rail and pipeline safety legislation was passed by the Minnesota Legislature and signed by Gov. Mark Dayton. The new law includes increased oversight of railroad companies, requires more railway inspections and provides for better emergency response training and preparedness in communities across Minnesota. Perhaps Montana could do something similar. Here is a link to the new law in Minnesota:

<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/planning-preparedness/Documents/minnesota-rail-safety-pipeline-safety-fact-sheet.pdf>

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY Minnesota Rail and ...

dps.mn.gov

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY Minnesota Rail and Pipeline Safety Regulations Rail and pipeline safety legislation was passed by the Minnesota Legislature and ...

I sincerely hope the Public Service Commission in Montana will be able to do something to ensure the safety of those Montanans who live near rail lines -- especially the people in rural communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important safety concern.

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