City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Urging Congress and the United States Department of Transportation to release specifications for tank car design and for Philadelphia rail companies to rapidly upgrade and replace crude oil tank cars.

WHEREAS, The volume of crude oil carried by rail increased 423% between 2011 and 2012 and volumes continued to increase in 2013, as the number of rail carloads of crude oil surpassed 400,000. Philadelphia had a near disaster when a train derailed on January 20, 2014; and

WHEREAS, Two unit trains, each approximately comprised of 120 tank cars, both carry domestic crude oil into Philadelphia every day from North Dakota's Bakken Shale which is potentially more volatile, corrosive and flammable than other types of crude oil. The DOT 111 and other currently used tank cars are not designed to carry this hazardous liquid and proposed changes to federal regulations have yet to be finalized, allowing these cars to continue to be used; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia area is going through a productive redevelopment as a hub for fossil fuel transport and refining, and Philadelphia is greatly expanding its pipeline, storage and transportation infrastructure. With this increased volume comes great risk and responsibility to ensure that Philadelphia communities are protected from potential safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, There have been devastating rail car accidents posing significant risks to life, property and the environment. Most recently in 2013 when 47 people perished in Lac-Megantic, Quebec and in Mount Carbon, West Virginia in February 2015 when a State of Emergency was called, these issues were brought to the forefront of public concern; and

WHEREAS, On January 20, 2014, a train derailment occurred on the Schuylkill Arsenal Railroad Bridge on a CSX Transportation (CSX) rail over the Schuylkill Expressway and Schuylkill River between South and 34th Streets; and

WHEREAS, The federal government is currently reviewing increased safety requirements for certain trains carrying flammable liquids in order to minimize the frequency and reduce the danger posed by derailments and accidents. These requirements would phase out many tank car models currently in use; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby urges Congress and the United States Department of Transportation to release specifications for tank car design achieving the highest safety standards and for Philadelphia Rail Companies to rapidly upgrade and replace crude oil tank cars.

FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Strongly urges Philadelphia rail companies to replace DOT 111s and other tank cars being used today to move Bakken crude and other flammable liquids that do not meet the highest safety standards.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia urges that the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and Philadelphia's Office of Emergency Management work together to proactively and

fully disclose train schedules and routes to first responders and the public, initiate emergency response workshops specific to major oil train derailments in communities along the rails and review and update the City's emergency response plan, evacuation routes and hazardous materials response plan for the increasing risks imposed by the transport of crude oil by rail within sixty days of resolution adoption.