



**City of Seattle**  
Edward B. Murray  
Mayor

September 8, 2014

Mathew Rose, Executive Chairman  
Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway  
2650 Lou Menk Drive  
Fort Worth, TX 76131-2830

Dear Mr. Rose:

Thank you for our recent meeting. I appreciated our conversation and hope that we can continue this open and productive dialogue. I want to reiterate that I support freight mobility and value the importance of rail to Seattle and the Washington economy. As I mentioned during our meeting, I have serious concerns about the shipment of crude oil, particularly Bakken Reserve crude, through Seattle. The volume of crude oil from the Bakken Reserve in North Dakota that BNSF transports through our area continues to increase along with the risks to our communities. These risks are further compounded in such a densely populated city as Seattle.

At the center of our concern is the antiquated rail tunnel running under the heart of downtown Seattle. The tunnel carries both freight and passengers, runs under other transportation tunnels, major city infrastructure and numerous high-density buildings. Unfortunately, the tunnel does not meet the safety standards of modern vehicular tunnels. As a result, in the event of a fire in the tunnel, first responders may not even be able to enter the tunnel to address the emergency. The impact on Seattle from such a fire would be uniquely catastrophic. The rapid increase in volume in crude oil shipments only makes it more likely that such an accident will occur.

More must be done to reduce the chance of a disaster and mitigate any problems from a spill, fire or explosion that could ensue. I appreciate that BNSF has taken some steps to make Seattle safer, such as changing schedules to avoid unit trains with hazardous materials and passenger trains from moving through the tunnel at the same time, and supporting training efforts of our first responders. But, to meet even basic safety thresholds, more could be done.

Office of the Mayor  
Seattle City Hall, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
600 Fourth Avenue  
PO Box 94749  
Seattle, Washington 98124-4749

Tel (206) 684-4000  
Fax: (206) 684-5360  
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There are several other things that BNSF can do immediately to make Seattle safer:

- Upgrade the tunnel's communications system to allow the use of radios by our first responders.
- Install a fire and vapor suppression system in the tunnel designed to release water and foam.
- Install permanent ventilation system for use in evacuation, rescue, and fire suppression.
- Provide financial support for specialized response, clean-up, and mitigation training for our hazardous materials and public works spill response teams.
- Sponsor annual drills on responding to tank car emergencies.
- Provide a foam response vehicle to use during an oil incident.
- Work with city departments on preparedness, response, and recovery planning as well as conducting a new security threat assessment for the BNSF rail corridor through Seattle.

While I am mayor of Seattle, I recognize this is a regional issue and am working with colleagues from across the Pacific Northwest to ensure that state and federal authorities, and rail carriers are doing everything possible to ensure the safety of our citizens. I urge BNSF to join us in these efforts. I know we can make rail transportation safer and maintain its important role in our economic growth. Moving forward, please continue your work with Fire Chief Gregory Dean, my Director of Emergency Management, Barb Graff and Steve Lee in the Office of Policy and Innovation. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Best regards,



Edward B. Murray  
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Seattle City Councilmember Mike O'Brien  
Chief Gregory Dean, Seattle Fire Department  
Barb Graff, Office of Emergency Management  
Ray Hoffman, Seattle Public Utilities  
Scott Kubly, Seattle Department of Transportation  
Senator Patty Murray  
Senator Maria Cantwell  
Congressman Jim McDermott  
Congressman Adam Smith  
Congressman Rick Larsen