



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Bill Shuster
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member

March 12, 2015

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

The increase in domestic production of crude oil from shale and other tight formations has resulted in a significant rise in the use of rail to transport crude oil long distances across the country. Recent accidents in the United States and Canada involving trains carrying a large quantity of crude oil have underscored the increased risks posed by transporting flammable hazardous materials in this manner.

As trains travel from oil production areas such as the Bakken in North Dakota to refineries along the Gulf, East and West Coasts, they pass through a number of states, including very rural areas. I have significant concerns that emergency responders in these states, particularly in the most remote and environmentally sensitive areas, may not be sufficiently prepared to respond to a serious rail accident involving the transportation of crude oil, such as what happened in Lac-Megantic, Quebec; Casselton, North Dakota; or Lynchburg, Virginia.

Given these concerns, I request that the Government Accountability Office examine emergency response capabilities to handle crude oil transportation by rail. In particular, I am interested in the following:

- 1) How have the railroads prepared to respond to potential incidents from transporting crude oil by rail and coordinated with state and local emergency responders, and what more could be done? I am specifically interested in:
 - notification to State emergency response agencies,
 - preparation and communication of spill response plans with States and local communities, and coordination of resources for responding to accidents,
 - prepositioning of critical resources necessary to respond to spills in both urban and rural areas, including forest lands, with limited road access, prone to catastrophic fire, or at-risk due to long-term drought,

Honorable Gene Dodaro

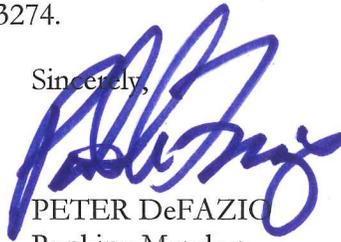
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- repositioning of critical resources to contain and clean-up oil spills into rivers or other water bodies, and
 - training of rail workers and State and local emergency responders.
- 2) What federal resources are available to assist emergency responders and are they sufficient to meet responders' needs? If not, what options exist for increasing federal resources?
 - 3) What actions has the U.S. Department of Transportation taken to improve emergency response to potential incidents involving the transportation of crude oil by rail and what more could be done?

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter. If you have questions, please contact Jennifer Homendy of my staff at (202) 225-3274.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member