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***BARRINGTON, IL & TRAC COALITION PETITION
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO MAKE FLEET OF EXISTING
HAZMAT TANK CARS SAFER IN FREIGHT RAIL DERAILMENTS***

CHICAGO – In response to the findings stemming from the National Transportation Safety Board’s (NTSB) investigation of a June 2009 Canadian National Railway (CN) freight train derailment outside of Rockford, Illinois, the Village of Barrington and the TRAC Coalition jointly filed a petition with the Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) asking that it promulgate rules that will make the tank car that carries ethanol and crude oil by rail in North America more crashworthy in derailment scenarios. The petition also requests that PHMSA require freight railways to provide an accurate and timely electronic listing of hazmat cargo to local emergency management response teams when an accident occurs so they are prepared to respond most effectively.

The accident investigated by the NTSB involved a train containing 75 cars of ethanol that derailed after the rail bed underneath the train had washed away. One person was killed and nine others injured when several of the derailed tank cars split open and started a massive fire that took over 24 hours to burn itself out. The tank cars involved in the accident – DOT-111 tank cars – have been known by federal regulators and the freight rail industry to have high failure rates in accidents since at least 1991, yet no manufacturing modifications that would make them more crashworthy have been instituted in that 20-year period.

In response to this pattern of tank car failure, industry convened a working group made up of the Association of American Railroads (AAR), freight railroads, and ethanol shippers to set manufacturing standards for new cars and asked PHMSA to adopt those standards last year. However, the industry request explicitly asked that the existing fleet of tank cars not be retrofitted to make them safer due to the cost of a retrofit program. The AAR calculates that a retrofit of a tank car would cost \$15,000, but with an average life span of over 30 years for the existing fleet, that amounts to less than \$500 a year.

This industry plan is not adequate according to Barrington President and TRAC Co-Chair Karen Darch. *“Because ethanol causes corrosion cracking in pipelines, tank cars will continue to be the most practical means of transporting ethanol. However, as the NTSB experts recognized, while the new AAR standards would make new cars safer than the existing cars, communities would be no safer if old and new tank cars are comingled when an ethanol train derailed. There is no rational reason to allow these tank cars that are filled with ethanol and known to be dangerous to roll through American communities for the next three decades.”*

Tom Weisner, Mayor of Aurora and TRAC Co-Chair concurs, *“It seems the railway industry has little concern for safety where it impacts potential profits, even minimally. When industry was sitting down at the table setting the standards, they should have had some local governments sitting down with them. We are charged with protecting the public safety when the worst-case scenario occurs in a hazmat train derailment, yet the emergency response point of view hasn’t been heard. Federal regulators need to remedy a known threat to the public by setting improved specs for both existing and newly manufactured tank cars.”*

In addition to requesting enhanced tank car safety specifications, the petition asked that the freight rail industry institute the electronic dissemination of hazmat cargo lists to first responders. Currently, the train crew is expected to hand off a paper copy of the cargo list to first responders in an accident. However, in the Rockford derailment, that hand-off didn’t occur for two hours because the train crew was blocked by fire from reaching the response team.

To view a copy of the Barrington/TRAC filing to PHMSA, visit www.fightrailcongestion.com.

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About TRAC: TRAC (The Regional Answer to Canadian National) is a coalition of suburban leaders that joined forces in 2008 to ensure the quality of life of more than one million residents in numerous Chicagoland communities is not adversely impacted by the CN/EJ&E merger. TRAC includes municipal and county leaders from Lake, Cook, McHenry, Kane, DuPage and Will Counties. Barrington represents the interests of Barrington area communities and is a founding member of TRAC.

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