

Support HB 4004 - Help End Railroad Roulette in the Columbia Gorge

By Peter Cornelison, Hood River City Councilor, February 8, 2018

My name is Peter Cornelison; I am a Hood River City Council member. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. For several years a number of us have been making trips to Salem to advocate for more protection from oil trains. This is because we continue to play railroad roulette in the Columbia Gorge; waiting until another oil train derailed and blows up. Each train is another spin of the roulette wheel, upping the changes for a catastrophic accident.

Hood River is only 7 miles west of sister city of Mosier, the derailment there was a wake-up call for every community along the rail lines. The City passed Resolution 2014-22 against oil trains almost 2 years before the Mosier oil train fire.

Another explosive oil train derailment is a question of when, not if. The average speed of many of these accident trains was just 34 MPH. Even with the new train safety standards, using thicker steel and better fittings, these tank cars are subject to puncture and ignition at speeds over 12 mph.

The LA Times found that 59% of oil train accidents are due to track failure, as was the case for the poorly maintained Union Pacific track through Mosier. Federal laws will not allow Oregon to end oil train traffic through our state, but we can make it safer and insure that the railroads are held accountable. This is why we need to pass the HB 4004 which would:

- Require contingency plans and training for oil train related spills;**
- Require railroads to have adequate insurance to cover worst case oil train derailments.**

Hood River also supports amending the bill to assess fees on railroad companies hauling oil through our state.

Transporting oil by rail is inherently unsafe. Until it is stopped, we must hold railroads accountable by improving oil spill response, establishing funding for emergency preparedness, and assuring that railroads can pay for worst-case derailments, oil spills, fires, and explosions. This bill, with the fee amendment, would do all of that. Please pass it out of this committee. Thank you.