Chicago Greens

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Eco-Group Seeks Rules for Railroads

Due to Danger of Tank Car Trains

The Chicago Greens maintain that residents and neighborhoods in the metropolitan area will be endangered by actions in the US Senate by Republicans for U.S. railroads. A bill approved this week on a party-line vote by a Senate committee brims with industry-sought provisions that would block, delay or roll back safety rules for operating crude oil tank car trains, such as installing modern braking systems to prevent a pile-up of cars.

The measure is to be part of a must-pass transportation bill that GOP leaders hope to put to a vote in the Senate as early as next week. The railroads seek to curtail regulations issued by the Department of Transportation on May 1, 2015, as a result of a series of crude oil tank cars spills and fires.

Shortly after the committee vote was taken, it was reported that a tank car train had derailed in Montana. Unlike many prior oil train accidents, no explosions or fire were reported

Despite the proven dangers of lengthy, tank car trains of over 100 cars, railroad executives, such as Charles Mormon, CEO of the Norfolk Southern, opposed the measures, vowed to “challenge” the rules, maintaining that safety is a “burden piled on the back of the railroad industry” that would make crude-oil-rail operations “prohibitively expensive.”

It has been determined that the Chicago railroad district, largest in the country, has an average of 42 tank cars trains passing through it on a weekly basis. This number is expected to increase as the oil industry expands.

The Chicago Greens have been in contact of elected officials at the federal, state and local levels, since late last year, in an ongoing effort to eliminate the danger posed to the communities through which the trains pass.