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AND CONSUMER CREDIT

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 4, 2015

Ms. Debra Miller
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Dear Chair Miller:

Thank you for hosting the recent meeting with Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton and my staff to discuss the plan to construct a rail connection in the City of Crystal between the eastbound Canadian Pacific mainline and the southbound Monticello branch of the BNSF line. Freight traffic would be routed through the cities of Crystal, Robbinsdale, and Minneapolis. I write to relay concerns from my constituents about the impact of rerouting freight traffic through their communities. I believe this proposal merits the rigorous review and opportunity for public input from an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The planned rerouting of train traffic is likely to direct more frequent, lengthy trains through these communities. These trains, many of them over 4,000 feet in length, present a significant public safety concern. For example, one train could simultaneously block 5 key at-grade intersections in Crystal for extended periods of time, potentially preventing emergency vehicles from getting to critical destinations.

In addition, it is my understanding that these trains will be shipping volatile materials like Bakken crude, potash, and ethanol. Earlier this month, a train carrying 109 cars of crude oil derailed in Boomer, West Virginia igniting catastrophic explosions, and leaking fuel into nearby groundwater resources. I have serious concerns about the threat posed by the shipment of highly combustible materials through densely populated areas in my district.

Last year, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommended expanded hazardous materials route planning for railroads to avoid populated, and otherwise sensitive areas. We know that crude oil shipments by rail have increased over 400 percent in the past ten years. The time is now to consider the safety of densely populated areas when routing potentially hazardous traffic.

Given these concerns, I urge the Surface Transportation Board to require that Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Canadian Pacific complete an EIS on their Crystal

realignment project. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Matt Croaston of my staff at 612.522.1212 or by e-mail to matt.croaston@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith Ellison". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font. It is positioned above the printed name and title.

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress