

February 27, 2003

Marilyn Showalter, Chairwoman
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive SW
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

RE: Docket #TR-021465

Dear Ms. Showalter:

I am very concerned about remote control locomotive operations in the state of Washington, however I am specifically alarmed about remote control locomotive operations in areas where commuter and passenger trains operate. As a Conductor on a Sounder Commuter train I am very worried that a remote controlled locomotive may inadvertently enter a mainline track in which our commuter trains are running. Such an event could cause enormous loss of life and property while potentially destroying or very negatively impacting our newly started up system.

As a lifelong railroader, who has also been a switchman for many years, I can tell you that remote control locomotive operations seriously impact the ability of switchcrews to understand and grasp the exact location of their locomotive. Hence, it is entirely possible, if not an absolute eventuality, that remote controlled locomotives will inadvertently enter main track systems while their switchcrews are unaware of that fact. Presently, our Sounder Commuter trains are traveling by South Seattle Yard at 70 miles per hour, on trackage without a direct line of sight ahead, whereby remote controlled locomotives are working on adjacent tracks with entry points onto our mainline trackage. If the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific Railroads continue to implement remote control operations this potential for catastrophe can only increase exponentially. This situation is an accident waiting to happen.

The Washington Transportation and Utilities Commission has a responsibility to the citizens of Washington State to regulate the operation of remote controlled locomotives in such a way as to safeguard the public from the above mentioned catastrophes. Of course, there are many other scenarios of potential disaster with poisonous, flammable and dangerous freight that may play out with the use of remote controlled locomotives as well. All these issues need to be addressed and managed by the WUTC.

Thank you, for your time and effort working in the behalf of Washington State citizens.

Sincerely,
James B. Delacour
2818 NW 69th Street
Seattle, Washington 98117
206-789-6342
jbdelacour@aol.com