

Kurt T. Solheim
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February 25, 2003

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

RE: Docket #TR-021465 (Remote Control Locomotive Regulation)

Dear Ms. Showalter and Commission,

Remote control locomotive operations and train movements, mandate there now exists a time to decide the fate of rail-transportation safety in the State of Washington. The Commission must now ask, "To what level of risk are we willing to allow the railroads to place the citizens of Washington State?" To gamble with potential disaster of this magnitude *is* avoidable and the consequences far too great *not* to act in the public's best interest by regulating remote control locomotive operations. Please consider the enormous quantities of hazardous materials handled by railroads across this great state. The potential for catastrophic disaster is colossal. Please remain focused on the very real potential of catastrophic disaster in remote control locomotive operations. We have everything to gain by taking the safe course; enacting basic, common sense regulation to protect citizens, railroad employees, and the environment; while carefully evaluating the technology further.

To date, there have been numerous documented incidents, accidents, derailments, hazardous material spills, and a near miss with AMTRAK associated with remote control locomotive technology. Rather than proceeding with small, test site pilot programs, the Class I railroads have intentionally flooded the industry with nearly full implementation--completely overwhelming the Federal Railroad Administrations resources to monitor safety issues associated with these type of operations.

Mike Elliott, Legislative Representative, BLE Division 402, Pasco, will outline localized safety issues associated with planned locomotive remote control operations at Pasco Terminal at the upcoming WUTC workshop.

Thank you for your very careful consideration of this vital public safety issue.

Sincerely,

Kurt T. Solheim
Local Chairman, BLE Division 402

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