



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

Joint Committee on Transportation
2021 Oregon Legislative Session

April 9, 2021

Co-Chair Beyer and Co-Chair McClain, members of the Committee,

For the record, Karl Koenig from the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council representing over 3500 career fire fighters, paramedics, wildland and fire prevention professionals across all of Oregon.

Our testimony today is in favor of House Bill 3339, proposing a ten-minute rule in the blockage of railway-highway grade crossing across Oregon.

It is our understanding that the “10-minute rule” was enacted to minimize blockage of railway highway grade crossing in 1996 to keep vehicle congestion to a minimum and allow for 5000 - 6000-foot-long trains and to increase the economy of scale shipping freight. Flash forward to current day Oregon, it is not uncommon to find trains in excess of 12,000 feet up to 15,000 feet making their way across all of the State. The repeal or enforcement of the 10-minute rule is also a day gone by. This a example of progress, train length and freight capacity versus public safety’s ability to delivery fast life-saving intervention and minimize the effects of fire.

As fire fighters and paramedics, we have to get to an emergency to make a difference. Time Sensitive Events, or TSE’s, to include heart attack, stroke and trauma are all measured in minutes from time of alarm or event to arrival at the appropriate hospital. Imagine a 12,000-foot-long train, or over two miles long blocking a railway-highway crossing for up to one hour due to the length of the train. The next closest crossing may actually be blocked by the same train, literally sealing off help from those who need it.. The fire propagation curve, as illustrated in NFPA 1710 Appendix A sec 5.2.2.2.1 shows a 10-fold increase in death, fire damage costs with each minute of unchecked fire leading up to flashover in the room or building of origin. The science of cardiac arrest, stroke, trauma is well documented and at the heart of this issue. Response time matter.

This issue is not one that rests in one section of Oregon, from Klamath Falls to Ontario and throughout the Willamette Valley emergency response is delayed by longer and longer trains. HB 3339 is a logical fix to minimize the blocking of railway-highway grade crossing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this issue on behalf of the career firefighters and paramedics of Oregon. We look forward to the entire committees support on HB 3339 and the next steps in the process.

Respectfully,

s/Karl Koenig

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