

Oil Trains in Baltimore: Too Dangerous for the Rails

Big Oil companies' push to extract and refine more extreme forms of oil has led to a surge of trains carrying toxic, explosive, and climate-polluting oil on our nation's rail lines.

Oil train traffic grew 5,100 percent from 2008 to 2014 due to the rapid increase in fracking for oil in the Bakken shale fields of North Dakota and in tar sands oil extraction in Canada.¹ An alarming rate of derailments and explosions across North America has followed.

In Maryland, oil trains are a growing danger to communities near rail lines and to Baltimore in particular. The oil industry is targeting Baltimore – with its large and centrally located port – as a gateway to ship crude oil to East Coast refineries. And since the crude export ban was lifted in December 2015, the oil industry has been given a green light ship crude oil worldwide.

To protect our communities and climate, CCAN is fighting to put the brakes on Big Oil's plans to use Baltimore as a gateway for extreme crude oil.

OIL TRAINS IN BALTIMORE: PUTTING 165,000 RESIDENTS AT RISK

- A Stand.earth analysis of known rail routes and U.S. Census data shows that 165,000 Baltimore residents live and work in the oil train “blast zone” – the area that could be directly impacted if a train were to derail and explode.
- Rail companies have fought to keep oil train routes secret in Maryland and sued the state to prevent their public disclosure.² However, we know that these trains roll through Baltimore. A company called Axeon shipped more than 100 million gallons of crude oil out of the Fairfield Peninsula in South Baltimore over the years 2013 and 2014.³
- More oil may be passing through unreported, since a regulatory loophole allows rail companies to keep secret shipments smaller than 1 million gallons -- a 35-car train.⁴

EXPLOSIVE OIL: TOO DANGEROUS FOR THE RAILS, OUR HEALTH, AND OUR CLIMATE

- The Bakken crude oil that the fossil fuel industry is moving on trains is more toxic and explosive than conventional oil. It contains a higher concentration of flammable methane and toxic fracking chemicals.
- **Not only are the contents extremely hazardous, but the trains themselves are outdated and dangerous.** A study by the National Transportation Safety Board found that crude oil trains have a high incidence of failure. The



The city of Baltimore at risk. This map, produced by Stand.earth, shows the evacuation zone (red) for oil train derailments and the potential impact zone (yellow) in case of an oil train fire. <explosive-crude-by-rail.org>

¹ American Association of Railroads, US. Rail Crude Oil Traffic, April 2017, Pg. 1.

² Sherman, Nattie. “Judge rules Md. must release crude oil shipment information.” Baltimore Sun. 15 August 2015.

³ Rector, Kevin. “The Baltimore Sun, Crude oil continues to flow through Maryland amid debate about safety.” Baltimore Sun. 30 March 2015.

⁴ Rector, Kevin. “CSX move crude oil through heart of Baltimore, documents show.” Baltimore Sun. 9 September, 2015.

oldest model trains, labeled “DOT-111,” have derailed repeatedly around the country and are nicknamed “Pepsi cans on wheels.” But newer “CPC-1232” train car models have also exploded in recent derailments, proving that there is no safe way to transport crude oil by rail.

- **When accidents happen, the human and environmental impacts are costly.** The deadliest oil train explosion occurred in July 2013 in Lac-Mégantic, Québec. Twenty crude oil trains derailed and exploded, killing 47 people and destroying the town. In April 2014, 10 newer tank cars carrying crude oil derailed and exploded in Lynchburg, VA, spilling about 30,000 gallons of Bakken crude oil and setting the James River on fire for two hours. Between February 2015 and June 2016, nine trains carrying crude oil derailed and caused fires, explosions, and evacuations across the country.⁵

AIR POLLUTION: DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS TO SOUTH BALTIMORE

- The South Baltimore area that oil companies use to ship crude oil already bears a disproportionate burden of toxic industrial pollution compared to the rest of Maryland. In 2016, ATTOM Data Solutions found the Curtis Bay zip code to have the third highest Total Environmental Hazard Index value in the country.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: BEATING BACK BIG OIL'S PLANS



In June 2015, after reviewing hundreds of comments from experts and citizens, Maryland regulators hit the pause button on a Texas-based company’s plans to build a new crude oil shipping terminal in South Baltimore.⁶

This move prevented an immediate increase in oil trains moving through Baltimore neighborhoods – for now. But stronger city, state and federal action is urgently needed to protect our health, safety and climate.

LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS CAN PROTECT COMMUNITIES FROM DANGEROUS OIL TRAINS

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL: The Baltimore City Council is considering a zoning ordinance to prohibit the construction of new crude oil terminals within Baltimore. This measure would prevent an increase in crude-by-rail traffic in the city and protect residents from explosive crude oil trains.

STATE LEGISLATORS: Our state legislators should support legislation during the next General Assembly session to require rail companies to disclose the route, frequency, and volume of crude oil being transported by rail.

FEDERAL LEADERS: Our federal leaders can enact an immediate ban on oil trains, because there is NO safe way to transport crude oil. At a minimum, the Department of Transportation can take the oldest and most dangerous cars off the rails and lower the volatility



TAKE ACTION:

For more information, contact:

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Learn more at:

chesapeakeclimate.org/maryland/fighting-crude-oil-by-rail-in-baltimore/

⁵ Earthjustice, *Crude-by-Rail Across America*. Last updated: 11 October 2016.

⁶ Barker, Jeff. “State denies permit for Baltimore crude oil terminal.” *Baltimore Sun*. 3 June, 2015.