

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0506

January 22, 2015

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I am writing to inquire about an important public safety issue that involves the Federal Communications Commission role in overseeing the implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC) by our nation's railroads. As you know, the railroad industry is required by the Department of Transportation (DOT) to implement PTC in order to address the serious issue of train-to-train collisions and with increased derailment risk associated with shipments of crude oil by rail.

Sacramento and Northern California are already seeing a significant increase in the movement of oil through our local communities, and the number of shipments is only expected to rise in the coming years. We are especially concerned with the high risks involved with transporting lighter, more flammable crude in densely populated areas. Should derailments, spills or explosions occur, as we have seen in Canada and the United States this past year, the consequences could be disastrous, costing lives, damaging property, and harming the environment.

As a member of the Energy and Commerce Communications and Technology Subcommittee and due to my serious concerns over derailments containing crude, I believe that PTC should be prioritized because it can reduce the likelihood of train-to-train collisions and derailments caused by excessive speed and unauthorized movement of trains. Although solutions for this important safety issue must be multi-pronged and PTC is one solution among many that are integral in making transporting lighter crude by rail safer, it needs to be implemented as quickly as possible, and this requires a strong and coordinated effort by the federal government.

Railroads are required by DOT to fully implement PTC technology by a December 2015 deadline as mandated by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. In order to comply, railroads need to install more than 20,000 new antenna structures nationwide to transmit PTC signals. Although progress has been made, due to both technological and non-technological challenges that have arisen throughout the implementation process, freight railroads have determined it will not be possible to fully implement a nationwide PTC system by the

deadline. Although the rail industry is expected to install PTC on approximately 60,000 miles of mainline track and has spent approximately \$4 billion to date, they now believe only 20 percent of the PTC network will be up and running by the Congressionally imposed deadline.

I appreciate your Commission's oversight including its important environmental and evaluation process. I understand that all PTC antenna structures are subject to the National Environmental Protection Act and National Historic Preservation Act, and it has been reported that although each PTC antenna was originally subject to a separate evaluation process, the FCC has issued a program comment to expedite review. I am supportive of the Commission's review process and I would like a brief report on the status of the current program review, including the number of antennas eligible and how many have been filed. I believe that we must be vigilant and put in place strict safety regulations that can meet the rapidly changing transportation and energy needs of our country. As such, I hope to hear that a resolution has been reached that allows for a workable solution to ensure timely deployment of PTC nationwide. I look forward to working with you on this important safety issue.

Sincerely,



DORIS O. MATSUI  
Member of Congress