

Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment to H.R. 1401.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume and ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment to H.R. 1401, the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act, would address an important issue surrounding our nation's efforts to expand electric power to major urban areas – safety.

On the morning of March 12, 2007, a CSX freight train derailed approximately 34 cars near Oneida, NY. Reports indicate there was an evacuation covering a 1-mile radius. Luckily, there were no reported deaths or injuries. However, a large fire occurred at the scene and residents and emergency responders reported hearing secondary explosions. CSX provided information that there were 40 tank cars carrying liquid petroleum gas in the train. What's more the derailment closed the New York State Thruway for several hours, requiring traffic to be detoured miles out of the way.

Prior to this incident, there were 18 train derailments in Western New York between January 2005 and September 2006, which further suggests that the condition of New York State's freight railways are in need of serious attention and repair.

While this concern continues to trouble the people of New York, a private company is seeking to build a 190 mile high voltage direct current transmission line from the Town of Marcy in Oneida County, NY, located in my district, to the Town of New Windsor in Orange County, NY.

The company estimates that more than 90% of the proposed primary and alternate routes will follow existing rights-of-way – both along railroad tracks and natural gas lines. The

transmission line would consist of 135-foot tall towers, and be operated with a rated power flow of 1200 mega watts. A portion of the proposed route follows the New York Susquehanna & Western Railway right-of-way, which would run through some of the more heavily populated cities and towns in Upstate New York. This is a situation where the consequences and risk are not only unknown, but wholly unnecessary.

For these reasons, my amendment to H.R. 1401 would require the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretary of Transportation, to conduct an assessment of the safety and security vulnerabilities of placing high voltage direct current electric transmission lines along active railroad rights-of-way.

The assessment shall, at a minimum, evaluate the risks to local inhabitants and consumers of electric power transmitted by those lines, associated with a train collision or derailment that damages such electric transmission lines.

It's no secret that as our cities continue to grow they will require more energy. And I fully support addressing that need. But meeting that need must be done in a safe and responsible way.

To this end, my amendment simply requires the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation to take a hard look at our existing rail infrastructure and assess the security vulnerabilities, so that we can avoid future electric power interruptions and preserve the safety of our constituents.

Thank you, I reserve the balance of my time.

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