

Senator Mike Peterson  
Senate Transportation

March 4th 2023

If you want to experience firsthand the reasons to support SB271 I invite you to spend one week living north of Marysville. I grew up in Marysville, spent time working for the UP in both track maintenance and train service. I have friends who work for the UP and I know what being an overnight stop has done for our community.

I'm now also seeing what it is currently doing to our community.

Train length has become a real issue. The most recent example was less than two weeks ago the evening of February 22. After a short meeting in Marysville I headed home sometime around 7:25. When I got to the crossing on hwy 77, 2.25 miles north of hwy 36 I was stopped by a train on the tracks coming south into Marysville. I could not see the lights from the engines. The train was moving very slowly and never did reach a complete stop. When I walked in to my house only another 1.25 miles north of the crossing it was 8:17. Forty-five minutes waiting on a train that never did come to a stop and I could not see the engines when I stopped at the crossing.

Usually trains will stop west of the hwy 77 crossing when they need to stop. This blocks the crossing to the west all the way through Herkimer. If they do not get stopped west of the crossing they will block Hwy 77 clear through Herkimer which is just over 2.5 miles from Hwy 77.

I have sat at the Hwy 77 crossing during harvest when you have tractors pulling grain carts, combines, and semis all moving to the next field or trying to get the last load to the elevator at the end of a long day. One evening we sat over 30 minutes while slowly watching it get dark. That 30 minutes left them to continue their journey to the next field in the dark. I've seen loaded semis leave the field close to our house 30 minutes before the elevator closed. I've watched as those semis had to make a decision after waiting on a train to try to get to the elevator now just minutes from closing. Unfortunately there is not a right decision to those situations. If they decide they can't make it to the elevator the decision then becomes where do they turn around? If you've never driven a semi you don't just make a u-turn at the next intersection.

And of course once the crossing clears you have 30 vehicles on each side of the tracks with each driver thinking they have the biggest reason to be in a hurry. I have witnessed a number of near misses as vehicles all maneuver to get past the slower moving vehicle or vehicles in front of them.

And finally there is of course the emergency situations. The stopped trains blocking crossings for three miles is obvious. What is not obvious is also the fact that the next crossing west of Herkimer may not be an option if it is raining due to non rock roads. There is also no direct line to get to it from the north. One has to wind their way turning a number of times from the north. Our emergency management coordinator has indicated a willingness for the UP to work with them when they know an ambulance will be coming

through but by the very name "emergency" these situations are a very small percentage of the times emergency vehicles are coming through.

And of course a train 3 miles in length does not pick up speed or slow down like your automobile, further compounding issues with delays. And in the unlikely case of a derailment towards the front of the train all those cars behind are going to continue their momentum making the situation even worse.

While I can't personally speak to it my understanding the situation In Frankfort on hwys 99 and 9 can be an even worse issue than north of Marysville.

I would also like to take this opportunity to speak to the possibility of moving to one man crews. It doesn't take a lot of thought to see there is nothing good that would come out of this. If there is a problem the one person cannot leave the engine unattended. This leave them to call for assistance which may take minutes or hours to arrive. With another crew member to walk back and check out situations emergency crews could be contacted as soon as they see what the situation is greatly reducing the response time of waiting for a crew to come out then having to contact emergency services.

Jon Ungerer  
Marshall County Kansas  
Commissioner