

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Philadelphians Say NO to Oil Trains As Canadians Lost in Derailment Disaster Last Year Are Remembered *Councilman Curtis Jones and Residents Call for Change and Protection***

**Philadelphia, PA** – Activists gathered today along the train tracks adjacent to the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia to call for protection of local communities, clean air and water supplies from dangerous oil trains that barrel through the City every day.

A moment of silence and the reading of the names of the 47 people who died in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, a year ago in a fiery train accident marked the opening of the program with a message that the City must not suffer the same fate. After speakers were heard, the group marched through the Park, led by people representing each of the 47 lives lost.

Speakers included: Reverend Stephen Keiser; Tracy Carluccio, Delaware Riverkeeper Network; Mary Donahue, Clean Water Action; Jess Gould, West Passyunk Neighbors Association; Kevin Poole, Northeast Grays Ferry Residents Association, Inc.; Philadelphia City Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr.

The group staged their event at the Schuylkill Banks Trail Park at 25<sup>th</sup> and Locust Streets next to the rails used by CSX Corporation for transporting 190,000 barrels of

crude oil every day to Philadelphia Energy Solutions' (PES) refinery in South Philadelphia.

In January of this year, seven cars of a CSX train derailed on the Schuylkill Arsenal Railroad Bridge, leaving an oil tank car dangling over the Schuylkill River for a week, a major catastrophe narrowly averted. Accidents occur regularly throughout the U.S., escalating with the production of Bakken shale oil from North Dakota. In fact, more oil was spilled in rail accidents in the U.S. last year than in the previous 4 decades, according to federal statistics.

And yet safety and emergency preparedness is lagging terribly behind the ramp up in domestic oil extraction. PES and CSX Corporation plan to expand crude-by-rail through Philadelphia by 50% before the end of the year, making Philadelphia more vulnerable than ever to disaster.

Mile-long trains rumble through the City's neighborhoods, over the river on the Schuylkill Arsenal Railroad Bridge and the crumbling 25<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge without warning twice a day – the train schedule is kept secret for “security reasons”, according to Emergency Management officials.

Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr. spoke about the dangers for City residents and the importance of preventing catastrophe in Philadelphia. Pastor Stephen Keiser memorialized those lost in Quebec and neighborhood organizations and environmental groups spoke of the need to stop allowing the oil companies to serve their needs above the public's.

Organizers of the event, a coalition of local groups (**see list below**), are calling for the dangerous trains through the populated City to stop, for effective emergency preparedness and the release and dissemination of critical emergency response information to the people of Philadelphia, and for sweeping change of oil transport at the federal regulatory level.

For instance, a petition is being circulated calling for a ban of the outdated and unsafe DOT111 tank cars known as “Pepsi cans on wheels” which are known to

puncture and explode due to substandard construction and the high volatility of Bakken crude oil.

The groups are advocating for fossil fuels to be replaced by clean, renewable and energy efficient power sources. The event is part of a national Week of Action exposing a myriad of crude-by-rail problems with the ultimate message “Keep oil off the rails and in the ground”. ([www.stopoiltrains.org](http://www.stopoiltrains.org))

“What is truly evil about the train disaster in Lac-Mégantic is the fact that this disaster could have been prevented if human life and safety were valued as highly as maximum profits. The derailment of an oil tanker over the Schuylkill River in January should alarm every Philadelphian and make us realize that what happened in Quebec last year could very easily have happened here. Pennsylvania has the resources to ensure that energy can be produced and transported safely, without catastrophic risk,” **said Stephen Keiser, Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, Philadelphia.**

“There is a growing awareness of the crude oil that CSX trains are carrying through our neighborhoods at an increasing rate. We cannot ignore the harm and loss of life that other crude oil derailments have caused across the U.S. and Canada. It is by sheer fate that no one has been seriously injured. It is only a matter of time. We are scared and much must be done to assure our safety and alleviate our fears,” **said Jessica Gould, President of West Passyunk Neighbors Association.**

“We don't have to look far to see the kinds of derailments occurring and what they can do to destabilize neighborhoods and communities. Whether it's in Delaware or New Jersey or Pennsylvania, we have seen recent instances when accidents happen and they have unintended consequences that are drastic and long term for communities,” **said Curtis Jones, Jr., Philadelphia City Councilman.**

“Because of the recent immense influx of crude-by-rail transportation on this aging infrastructure in Philadelphia, we're concerned about the ability of the rail network to handle it, and our city's ability to prepare for and respond to an accident. It is only a

matter of time before the City is tested with a disastrous derailment,” **said Mary Donahue, Program Organizer with Clean Water Action.**

“Philadelphia gets a double whammy from shale oil because layered on top of the risk of exploding tank cars, emergency evacuations, and air and water pollution these oil trains bring polluting fossil fuel to the refineries, terminals, and ports that make up the Philly Frack Hub. These menacing oil trains have got to be stopped and families and community health put first,” **said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

“The people of Pennsylvania have a constitutional right to clean air and clean water. God forbid a derailment happens; it would be the sum of all fears for communities here. CSX has a responsibility to operate safely but the 25<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge is a crumbling hazard, along with other dangers. We need our quality of life, and our environmental and economic life in the City improved and people protected from these trains,” **said Kevin Poole of Northeast Grays Ferry Residents Association.**

“Ticking time-bombs should not be rolling by our schools and neighborhoods on a daily basis. We need to free ourselves from our fatal addiction to fossil fuel, whether it's carried by oil-bomb trains or pipelines. Another world is possible, a just, ecologically sustainable world, but we can't build it on a dead planet”, **said Cynthia Bertrand Holub of Rising Tide Philly.**

“Our local, state, and federal officials have an absolute obligation to protect us from the lethal threat and from the toxic spills into our waterways, from shale oil and gas “bomb trains”. We join in protest and outrage, and remain committed to hold decisionmakers’ feet to the fire until residents’ water, air, and climate are protected, the bomb trains halted, and a safe energy economy is built”, **said Iris Marie Bloom, Founder, Protecting Our Waters.**

**Groups participating in the event include (alphabetical order):**

***Clean Water Action (CWA)** is a million member national environmental organization with 17 statewide offices including Pennsylvania. CWA’s mission is to protect the*

*environment, public health, economic well being, and community quality of life.*

<http://www.cleanwateraction.org/pa>

**Delaware Riverkeeper Network** is a nonprofit advocacy organization with 15,000 members throughout the watershed states working to defend the entire 13,539 square mile Delaware River Watershed. [www.delawareriverkeeper.org](http://www.delawareriverkeeper.org)

**Northeast Grays Ferry Residents Association, Inc.** is a registered 501 c3 nonprofit organization that believes in equal opportunity, public health and safety, economic development and fights poverty to enhance the quality of life for the people of Northeast Grays Ferry.

**Philadelphia Interfaith Power and Light (Phila IPL)** is a Chapter of Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light (PA/IPL), communities of faith responding to climate change as a moral issue.

**Rising Tide** is a grassroots network of unpaid activists focused on direct action targeting the funders and profiteers of dirty energy projects.

<https://www.facebook.com/PhillyRisingTide>

**South Philadelphia Rainbow Committee** is a grassroots community group in Southwest Philadelphia, concerned with bringing an overall sense of security and self-awareness to the City of Philadelphia.

**West Passyunk Neighbors Association** is working to strengthen our community and improve our neighborhood's way of life, 18th to 25th, Passyunk to Mifflin

<https://www.facebook.com/wpnaphilly>

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