

SUBSTITUTE
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago is deeply concerned with ensuring the safety and well-being of its residents and communities; and

WHEREAS, recent derailments involving Norfolk Southern Railroad Company in East Palestine, Ohio, and in Detroit, Michigan, as well as the derailment involving Canadian National Railway in Matteson, Illinois, have highlighted significant safety concerns and potential risks to public health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, the derailments underscore the need for enhanced safety standards and regulatory oversight to prevent future incidents and protect communities along railroad routes; and

WHEREAS, the tragedy that occurred in East Palestine resulted in a cloud of fumes traveling across as many as 16 states; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the February 2023 derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, the Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency began the process of drafting a consent decree to enter into with Norfolk Southern Railroad Company to monitor and remediate the health of those affected; and

WHEREAS, a derailment tragedy could happen anywhere that train tracks run through communities; and

WHEREAS, on June 27, 2024, residents and businesses in Matteson, Illinois, had to evacuate after 25 cars carrying various substances, including liquified petroleum gas, derailed; and

WHEREAS, while we are grateful no one was injured, this latest derailment is demonstrative of the public health and environmental risks communities with railroads face daily; and

WHEREAS, more trains carrying explosive crude oil pass through Chicago than any other large metropolitan area in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the Norfolk Southern Intermodal Yard and associated operations are in the process of expanding in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, as a result of a complaint alleging that the City discriminated on the basis of race and national origin in violation of Title VI, the Fair Housing Act, Section 109, and HUD's implementing regulations, the City of Chicago entered into a Voluntary Compliance Agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, requiring it to complete a Cumulative Impact Assessment describing how environmental burdens, health conditions, and social stressors vary across neighborhoods, and identify neighborhoods that experience the greatest cumulative impacts, or "Environmental Justice Neighborhoods;" and

WHEREAS, in September 2023, the Chicago Department of Public Health and the then Office of Climate and Environmental Equity published the City's Cumulative Impact Assessment Summary Report and Chicago Environmental Justice Index Map; and

WHEREAS, the Cumulative Impact Assessment and Environmental Justice Index Map identified Englewood and other neighborhoods adjacent to Norfolk Southern Railroad Company's operations in Chicago as among the most disproportionately burdened by cumulative impacts; and

WHEREAS, the legislature of the United States of America has been working on solving this issue through a package of environmental and safety reforms, introduced as the Railway Safety Act, which would enhance safety procedures for trains carrying hazardous materials, increase rail car inspections to ensuring that all rail cars on train carrying hazardous materials are inspected by a qualified rail car inspector at regular intervals, reduce the risk of wheel bearing failures, require well-trained two-person crews aboard every train, force rail carriers to face heightened fines for wrongdoing, support communities impacted by rail disasters, and invest in future safety improvements; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Chicago calls on the United States Congress to pass the Railway Safety Act and ensure communities around the country are better protected from similar disasters by strengthening laws related to operational improvements, transparency, and community involvement, and calls on relevant federal agencies, including the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Railroad Administration, to strengthen and enforce railroad safety standards to mitigate the risk of accidents and derailments;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to the United States Congress, the Department of Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Railroad Administration, the National Transportation Safety Board, Norfolk Southern Railroad Company, the Surface Transportation Board, the Chicago Metropolitan Area for Planning, and other relevant stakeholders to emphasize the City of Chicago's support for improved railroad safety standards and expanded oversight measures.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. E. Hadden", is written over a horizontal line.

Maria E. Hadden
Alderwoman, 49th Ward