



Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Ohio State Legislative Board

A Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference

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Ohio Senate – Transportation Committee
February 28, 2024 Meeting Testimony of John Esterly

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee – my name is John Esterly and I am the Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, North America's oldest operating labor union. I represent over 2,500 active and retired railroad transportation professionals across the four largest railroads in Ohio. I am here today to offer my support of Senate Resolution 196, which would ask Congress to require shippers to properly secure solid waste shipments.

Solid waste is one of Ohio's top commodities shipped by rail. Each railroad my organization represents, along with many others in our state, handles large quantities of solid waste as it passes through. Although sometimes the final destination is beyond our borders, several larger solid waste facilities call Ohio home. These facilities provide employment opportunities, disposal fees, tax revenue, and other financial benefit for Ohio, but we expect them to be good corporate neighbors of their communities.

There are no current requirements to secure general solid waste shipments. Much of the waste is shipped in open railcars with little or no covering. Some shippers will loosely apply plastic netting to the top of the shipment – this covering is often blow free during shipment. Unfortunately, without any covering the waste can be blown from the railcar by the forces of shipping. A strong wind can even blow waste from the railcar when stationary.

Solid waste can be anything modern society disposes of. Food and natural products that will decay relatively quickly pose a nuisance, but plastics and metals can cause serious harm. Modern solid waste disposal sites take every action to ensure that these products are safely disposed of – but this only happens if the waste makes it to the facility. A trail of trash along the rails is not only an eyesore, it has a lasting effect on the environment and residents whose yards are littered with garbage.

This is an easy problem to fix. The shippers simply need to be more deliberate with their preparation of the solid waste shipments, properly wrapping the top of the railcar with netting to prevent loose waste from escaping – some shippers already do this. Requiring all waste shippers to take the extra time to secure their loads would not be prohibitively expensive, and would have a positive impact on all of the communities along the route.

Thank you to the Chair for the opportunity to present testimony today, and thank you to Vice Chair Reineke for bringing this before the Senate.