Bakken Crude and the Ford Pinto of Railcars: The Growing Need for Adequate Regulation of the Transportation of Crude Oil by Rail

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BAKKEN CRUDE AND THE FORD PINTO OF RAILCARS:
THE GROWING NEED FOR ADEQUATE REGULATION OF
THE TRANSPORTATION OF CRUDE OIL BY RAIL

I. INTRODUCTION

On July 6, 2013, a violent explosion rocked the small town of Lac-Megantic, located in Quebec, Canada. The explosion leveled nearby buildings and took the lives of forty-seven individuals. Response teams finally extinguished the flames after two days of relentless battle against the fire. The source of the explosion was a runaway train that derailed when passing through the town. While train derailments are violent in their own right, they are not commonly associated with explosions of such magnitude. The train that derailed, however, was a seventy-two car train transporting nearly two million gallons of crude oil from the Bakken Shale region of North Dakota by means of DOT-111 tanker cars. Upon derailment, a spark ignited the leaking crude oil, causing the tankers to explode.

Transportation of crude oil by rail has become an increasingly common practice and is currently responsible for the transportation of “more than [ten] percent of” all American oil. While the

2. Id. (discussing damage caused by Lac-Megantic explosion).
3. Id. (elaborating on damage explosion caused).
5. See id. (discussing increased dangers of transporting oil by rail).
6. The Bakken Shale is an oil shale “located in Eastern Montana and Western North Dakota, as well as parts of” Canada. Bakken Shale Oil Formation, Bakken Shale, http://bakkenshale.com/ (last visited December 20, 2015). It is “one of the largest oil developments in the [United States] in the past 40 years.” Id.
7. See Robbins, supra note 4 (discussing contents of derailed tank cars).
industry intended rail car use to be a temporary fix to a temporary problem, the practice appears to be here to stay.\textsuperscript{10} Oil production has boomed in states that are not traditionally associated with oil production, and, as a result, states such as North Dakota lack sufficient pipeline capacity to deliver all their crude oil to refineries.\textsuperscript{11} Unwilling to wait for Congress to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline,\textsuperscript{12} oil companies have turned to railways, resulting in an over four thousand percent increase in the annual number of carloads transporting crude oil.\textsuperscript{13} This unexpected and dramatic rise in rail-car use spawned an equally sudden demand for tanker cars (tankers) that could transport crude oil.\textsuperscript{14} To meet this surge in demand, rail companies provided oil companies with the one tanker that they had available, the DOT-111, which some have named the “Ford Pinto of tanker cars.”\textsuperscript{15} The DOT-111 earned its nickname because of its reputation as a tanker car prone to puncturing, leaking, and sparking; “[it] was never intended to haul volatile crude oil.”\textsuperscript{16} The dangers of the DOT-111 tank car are compounded given the current state of the American rail system.\textsuperscript{17} Many portions of the American railway system, including tracks and

\textsuperscript{10} See id. (discussing oil company plans to expand railways to Athabasca oil sands).

\textsuperscript{11} See id. (explaining need for oil by rail).

\textsuperscript{12} The Keystone XL Pipeline is a proposed expansion of the already existing Keystone Pipeline. See What is the Keystone XL Pipeline?, STATEIMPACT, https://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/tag/keystone-xl-pipeline/ (last visited Sept. 20, 2015) (explaining that Keystone Pipeline and proposed expansion project named Keystone XL Pipeline). The expansion involves two different sections: northern and southern. See id. The southern expansion, which connected Oklahoma to the Gulf Coast by way of Texas, is already operating. See id. The northern section, which connects Nebraska to Alberta and, more importantly, passes through North Dakota’s Bakken shale play, is currently in development. See id. The northern expansion is not complete because TransCanada, the company building the Keystone XL Pipeline, has been unable to obtain a Presidential Permit allowing it to build a pipeline across the boarder between the United States and Canada. See id. The issuance of the Presidential Permit has become a political issue: some argue that the pipeline will add jobs to the American economy while others are concerned of the Keystone XL Pipeline’s potential environmental impact. See id.

\textsuperscript{13} See Krauss & Mouawad, supra note 9 (quantifying increase in use of rail to transporting crude oil). Currently, approximately 400,000 carloads of crude oil travel by railcar per year compared to 9,500 in 2008. Id.

\textsuperscript{14} Id. (discussing recent oil boom).


\textsuperscript{16} See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (discussing DOT-111’s dangerous design flaws).

\textsuperscript{17} See id. (discussing how oil by rail problems extend beyond DOT-111 tankers).
bridges, are “more than a century in age” and have not been maintained for years.\footnote{18. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (discussing flaws of aging American railways).}

Considering the aging infrastructure of the American railway system and the DOT-111’s propensity to leak, continued transportation of crude oil by railcar poses serious environmental and safety concerns.\footnote{19. See Krauss & Mouawad, supra note 9 (discussing dangers of transportation of crude oil by rail).} Not only did the Lac-Megantic derailment result in a deadly explosion, but its punctured DOT-111 tanker cars spilled oil into “nearby waterways.”\footnote{20. Eaton, supra note 8 (expanding damages from oil by rail beyond explosions and to oil spills).} With the increased reliance on trains to transport oil, the number of gallons of spilled oil has increased as well.\footnote{21. See Robbins, supra note 4 (explaining how increases in railcar use correlates with increases of oil spills).} As this method of transportation continues to grow, so does the threat to the environment.\footnote{22. See id. (explaining how increases in railcar use correlates with increases of oil spill).}

In response to the Lac-Megantic catastrophe, Canadian regulators acted swiftly, requiring the DOT-111 to either “be retrofitted or phased out by May 2017.”\footnote{23. Eaton, supra note 8 (discussing Canadian regulatory response to Lac-Megantic accident).} While the United States Department of Transportation issued emergency orders in the wake of Lac-Megantic, these orders focused primarily on the due diligence required of rail companies in transporting crude oil through towns.\footnote{24. See DOT Issues Emergency Order Requiring Stricter Standards to Transport Crude Oil by Rail, U.S. DEP’T OF TRANSP., http://www.dot.gov/briefing-room/dot-issues-emergency-order-requiring-stricter-standards-transport-crude-oil-rail (last updated Mar. 6, 2014) (discussing United States’ response to Lac-Megantic explosion). The DOT passed four emergency orders over the span of seven months. Id.} Meaningful regulation pertaining to the use or improvement of the DOT-111 faces staunch opposition from oil and railroad companies.\footnote{25. See Eaton, supra note 8 (discussing oil and railroad company opposition to regulations concerning transportation of crude oil by rail).} As a result, regulatory efforts to curtail the dangers of oil by rail have had mixed-success.\footnote{26. See id. (explaining current state of regulation pertaining to transportation of crude oil by rail).}

Section II of this Comment discusses the events and factors that have contributed to the increasing use and danger of rail for transportation of Bakken crude.
transporting crude oil. Section III assesses the destructive and environmental dangers posed by transportation of crude oil by rail. Section IV analyzes the regulatory response to the rise of oil as a result of rail shipments. Finally, Section V addresses the need for more regulation and discusses the impediments to additional regulation of transporting oil by rail.

II. BACKGROUND

A. North Dakota’s Bakken Shale and the North American Oil Boom

Since 2008, North America has experienced a sharp increase in oil production. One of the main catalysts for the sudden boom in the United States is the increase of oil production in North Dakota. Previously, North Dakota produced less than 200 thousand barrels of oil per day. Now, North Dakota produces over 1.2 million barrels per day. With this rapid growth in production, North Dakota has surpassed California and Alaska to become the United States’ “second leading oil producing state.”

The oil boom in North Dakota can be attributed to both finally accessing the Bakken Shale and an increasing demand for domestic

27. For a discussion of the events and factors that have contributed to the increasing use and danger of oil by rail, see infra notes 31-129 and accompanying text.
28. For a discussion of the destructive and environmental dangers of oil by rail, see infra notes 124-161 and accompanying text.
29. For a discussion of the regulatory response to the rise of oil by rail, see infra notes 162-215 and accompanying text.
30. For a discussion of the need for more regulation and the impediments to additional regulation, see infra notes 216-251 and accompanying text.
31. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (discussing oil boom in North America, particularly United States).
32. Id. (attributing United States’ oil boom to fracking in North Dakota).
33. Id. (discussing pre-fracking levels of production).
34. Id. (comparing current levels of oil production to those of just five years ago).
35. See id. (discussing North Dakota’s rise to one of the United States’ leading oil producers); see also Jack Nicas, Oil Fuels Population Boom in North Dakota City, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 6, 2012, 8:23 PM), http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142405270230407200435773281000398723454 (comparing United States’ top four oil producing states: Alaska, California, North Dakota, and Texas); see also Associated Press, ND Becomes Nation’s Second-Leading Oil Producer, FOX NEWS (May 15, 2012), http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/05/15/nd-becomes-nation-second-leading-oil-producer/ (commenting on North Dakota passing Alaska as United States’ second-leading producer of oil). North Dakota’s oil production is “second only to Texas.” See Weather Films, supra note 15.
Although the shale has only recently become accessible, residents of North Dakota have long known that the Bakken Shale contained oil deep beneath the surface. New technologies, such as hydraulic fracturing (fracking), have allowed North Dakota to tap into the Bakken Shale, resulting in a surge in oil production. North Dakota is able to sustain such high levels of production due to the increasing demand for domestic oil. In 2009, prior to fracking in the Bakken Shale, the United States imported approximately two-thirds of the oil it consumed. As a result of fracking, the United States now only imports approximately one-third of the oil it consumes.

While oil companies have been able to hire more labor to keep up with North Dakota’s rapidly increasing oil production, the state’s pipeline infrastructure is insufficient. To keep up with production, oil companies turned to railways as a means of transporting the excess crude oil. Approximately two-thirds of the oil produced in North Dakota travels to refineries via rail.

36. See Robbins, supra note 4 (discussing catalyst of oil boom in North Dakota).
38. See Christina Nunez, N.D. Oil Train Fire Spotlights Risks of Transporting Crude, Nat’l Geographic (Jan. 1, 2014, 10:03 AM), http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/energy/2013/12/131231-north-dakota-oil-train-fire/ (discussing use of fracking in North Dakota). “Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a technique designed to recover gas and oil from shale rock.” What is Fracking and Why is it Controversial?, BBC News (June 27, 2013), http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-14432401 (defining hydraulic fracturing). The process involves drilling horizontally into a rock layer containing natural gas, known as a shale, and using a “high-pressure water mixture . . . to release the gas inside.” Id. Fracking is a controversial practice because it can be used to reach natural gas previously thought to be unobtainable, but at the cost of severe negative impacts on the environment. See id.
39. See New Boom Reshapes Oil World, Rocks North Dakota, supra note 37 (discussing increasing demand for domestic oil).
40. Id. (discussing United States’ prior dependence on foreign oil).
42. See New Boom Reshapes Oil World, Rocks North Dakota, supra note 37 (discussing boom towns popping up in North Dakota as workers flood well sites); see also Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (explaining how North Dakota’s pipelines were insufficient to keep up with oil production). Construction of the Keystone XL pipeline would alleviate much of the burden placed on North Dakota’s current pipelines. See Eaton, supra note 8; see also infra notes 55-58, 230-48 and accompanying text.
43. Weather Films, supra note 15 (explaining how oil companies are using railroad system to transport crude oil that pipelines cannot carry).
44. See Krauss & Mouawad, supra note 9 (discussing amount of oil North Dakota ships on railcar).
North Dakota is not alone in this new practice. Oil by rail has become common throughout the American Midwest and Canada. Roughly two hundred railroad lines, or “virtual pipelines,” connect Casselton, North Dakota; Houston, Texas; and numerous shale plays in between these states. These lines are not limited to the Midwest; they reach as far west as Bakersfield, California and pass through major cities such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Portland, Oregon. Prior to 2010, less than one percent of American oil was carried via rail, but today that share is “more than ten percent.”

Canada transports crude oil from the Alberta oil sands to refineries by rail. The oil sands in Alberta, Canada are the third largest in the world and are capable of producing 1.9 million barrels of oil per day. Transporting crude oil by rail is a growing practice in Canada, just like it is in the United States. Evidencing this growth, in December of 2013, the first train carrying crude oil from Canadian oil sands departed from a newly constructed rail terminal in Edmonton, Alberta. The new terminal runs East and West across Canada and can distribute 890 thousand barrels of oil per day.

45. See id. (commenting that transporting oil by rail is not unique to North Dakota).
46. See id. (discussing how use of railcar has become popular throughout Midwest).
47. See id. (mapping railroads lines used for transporting oil).
48. See id. (discussing expansiveness of railroad lines carrying oil, including a line connecting Topeka, Kansas to Bakersfield, California); see also Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (naming Philadelphia and Portland as major urban areas that tankers carrying oil pass through).
49. See Krauss & Mouawad, supra note 9 (discussing increasing use of rail to transport oil).
51. Oil Sands, Alberta, http://www.energy.alberta.ca/ourbusiness/oil-sands.asp (last visited Jan. 22, 2015) (discussing size and production capacity of Alberta oil sands). Alberta’s oil sands are third behind Saudi Arabia and Venezuela’s. Id. Alberta anticipates being able to produce as much as 3.8 million barrels per day by 2022. Id.
52. See Hussain, supra note 50 (discussing increasing use of rail to transport crude oil in Canada).
53. See id. (discussing expansion of rail infrastructure to accommodate demands of oil distribution). Canexus Corp., owner of the new terminal, is one of many companies building new terminals or expanding old ones in an effort to match demand for crude oil. See id. Some of these projects cost more than 100 million dollars to complete. Id.
54. See id. (comparing capacity of new rail terminal to Keystone XL pipeline).
Transportation of crude oil by rail was initially a short-term and makeshift solution for the distribution problems in the United States, but the practice appears to have become permeant.\(^{55}\) Although the Keystone XL pipeline would increase Midwest pipeline capacity and reduce dependency on rail, politics have made the pipeline’s future uncertain.\(^{56}\) Delays regarding the Keystone XL pipeline have caused oil companies to further invest in rail.\(^{57}\) While the Keystone XL pipeline could carry 830 thousand barrels per day, rail is already carrying 760 thousand barrels per day.\(^{58}\)

B. American Rail: A Second Great Boom and the Transportation of Crude Oil

With the increasing use of rail to transport unstable crude oil, the critics of the practice are scrutinizing the state of the American railroad system.\(^{59}\) In particular, critics are concerned that American railroads are not in sufficient condition to transport such hazardous cargo, especially considering that some sections are over one hundred years old.\(^{60}\) Critics fear that without adequate federal oversight, the private businesses that own the majority of American railroad lines lack the proper incentives to safely maintain railroad lines.\(^{61}\)

1. The Reemergence of American Freight Rail

By the 1970s, the once great American railroad system struggled to keep pace with its more popular competitors: airplanes and

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55. See Krauss & Mouawad, supra note 9 (terming transportation of oil by rail “stopgap measure”).
56. See id. (linking delays in Keystone XL Pipeline to increased demand for oil by rail); see also Robbins, supra note 4 (discussing growing uncertainty regarding approval of Keystone XL pipeline).
57. See Eaton, supra note 8 (discussing American Petroleum Institute’s argument that failure to approve Keystone XL pipeline requires further investment in rail).
58. See id. (comparing estimated capacity of Keystone XL pipeline to current capabilities of American rail). For a further discussion of the Keystone XL pipeline’s impact on oil by rail, see infra notes 290-48 and accompanying text.
59. See Joann Muller et al., All Aboard: Why America’s Second Rail Boom Has Plenty of Room to Run, FORBES (Jan. 22, 2014, 6:00 AM), http://www.forbes.com/sites/joannmuller/2014/01/22/americas-second-rail-boom/  (discussing how transportation of oil by rail has resulted in heightened scrutiny of American railroad infrastructure).
60. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (expressing concern over age of railroad infrastructure).
61. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (discussing lack of standards for private maintenance of railroads). For a more complete discussion of the state of regulation regarding railroad maintenance, see infra notes 162-215 and accompanying text.
automobiles. American rail began to transition into its modern form when Congress passed the Staggers Rail Act of 1980, which deregulated the industry by allowing railroad companies to exit the flagging passenger rail business and focus exclusively on freight. Once deregulated, railroad companies possessed greater control over price setting and could contract privately with shippers. Price control and contracting increased competition not only amongst the rail companies, but also amongst the airline and automobile industries.

Since the passage of the Staggers Rail Act, the rail industry has centralized its resources; the industry condensed from twenty-six large railroad carriers into just seven large carriers. Further, the post-Staggers Act era also led to an influx of investment. Because railroads are privately owned, private owners of American railroads bear the costly responsibility of maintaining a sound infrastructure. In the thirty years since the passage of the Staggers Act, the rail industry has invested over 500 billion dollars in infrastructure.


64. See Dovell, supra note 62 (discussing Staggers Rail Act’s role in bringing about modern rail system by deregulating American railroad industry and thus allowing railroads to control price setting and privately contract with shippers). The Staggers Rail Act did not completely deregulate the industry, but it did represent a significant decrease in regulation of the industry. See id.

65. See Palley, supra note 62 (listing rail industry’s new freedoms post Staggers Rail Act).

66. See id. (discussing positive impact of Staggers Rail Act). Prior to the Staggers Rail Act, freight rail had been sharply declining in market share of freight shipments; after the Staggers Rail Act, however, rail stabilized at above forty percent market share, which is greater than its pre-Staggers’ share. See id.

67. See Dovell, supra note 62 (commenting on consolidation of rail industry post Staggers Rail Act).


70. See id. (providing amount rail industry has invested into its infrastructure). Investment is not purely a private matter; state and federal governments have also provided grants to railroads. See Am. Soc’y for Civil Eng’rs, Rail: Success Stories, 2013 Rep. CARD FOR AM. INFRASTRUCTURE, http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/a/#p/rail/success-stories (last visited Feb. 3, 2015) (discussing use of fed-
In recent years, the private sector has spent approximately twenty billion dollars per year on railroad infrastructure. In its 2013 Report Card For America’s Infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers noted, “in 2010 alone, freight railroads renewed the rails on more than 3,100 miles of railroad track, equivalent to going coast to coast.” Investment trends indicate that even without extensive federal oversight, the rail industry’s private sector has placed an emphasis on securing its infrastructure. Notwithstanding its impressive investment in infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers graded the rail industry a “C+” in its 2013 Report Card For America’s Infrastructure.

2. Growing Concerns Over Safety

The Midwest’s oil shale boom has been the driving force in the railroad industry’s most recent resurgence. Currently, American freight rails are transporting an unprecedented amount of crude oil. With increased transportation of this dangerous freight, there...
is an equally growing concern over rail safety.\textsuperscript{77} As pressure mounts to transport as much oil as possible from Alberta’s tar sands to Gulf Coast refineries, railroads are adding an increasing number of oil tankers to their trains to maximize the amount of oil each train can transport.\textsuperscript{78} Consequently, railroad companies are using longer trains to accommodate additional oil tankers, a practice contributing to a dramatic increase in rail accidents.\textsuperscript{79} Despite an eighty percent decrease in the railroad accident rate from 1980 to 2012, American rail accidents in 2013 were responsible for spilling more oil in that one year than the previous thirty years combined.\textsuperscript{80}

Despite the praise for the private sector’s investments in infrastructure, critics are concerned that rail infrastructure may be inadequate to transport such high volumes of crude oil.\textsuperscript{81} The disparity of resources between the freight rail industry’s largest and smallest companies is of particular concern.\textsuperscript{82} North American railroads are classified as Class 1, railroads with operating revenues of more than $433.2 million; Class 2, railroads with operating revenues less than $433.2 million but more than $34.7 million; or Class 3, railroads

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{77} See id. (connecting increased transportation of oil by rail to increased risk of accidents); see also, Robbins, supra note 4 (noting sharp increase in rail accidents over recent years).
\item \textsuperscript{78} See James Conca, Pick Your Poison for Crude—Pipeline, Rail, Truck or Boat, \textit{Forbes} (Apr. 26, 2014, 10:35 AM), http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2014/04/26/pick-your-poison-for-crude-pipeline-rail-truck-or-boat/ (explaining growing pressure on railroads to maximize amount of oil each train transports). Delays with the Keystone XL Pipeline have left railroads with the burden of meeting the pipeline’s promised supply of oil from Alberta’s tar sands. See id.
\item \textsuperscript{79} See id. (attributing recent increase in rail accidents to aggressively adding more cars to each train).
\item \textsuperscript{80} See id. (providing puzzling statistics that show decreases in accidents but increases in amount of oil spilled). In 2013, American railroad accidents spilled 1.5 million gallons of crude oil. See id. This number would be significantly greater if it were to include oil spilled in Canada as well; the Lac-Megantic derailment alone spilled 1.6 million gallons of crude oil. See id. While an increase in the amount of oil spilled is an expected consequence of shipping more oil on rail, it still marks a troubling upward trend. See id. The rail and oil industries argue that the vast majority of oil shipped by rail arrives safely at its destination, but for those concerned about the environment and human health, the issue is more a matter of net oil spilled, and less the rate at which spills occur. See id.
\item \textsuperscript{81} See Eric de Place & Rich Feldman, \textit{The Big Problem with Letting Small Railroads Haul Oil}, \textit{Sightline Daily} (Oct. 8, 2014, 10:00 AM), http://daily.sightline.org/2014/10/08/the-big-problem-with-letting-small-railroads-haul-oil/ [hereinafter de Place & Feldman, \textit{The Big Problem}] (expressing concern regarding small railroad companies transporting oil due to insufficient resources to maintain safe rails); see also Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (raising concerns over private sector’s maintenance of rail bridges).
\item \textsuperscript{82} See de Place & Feldman, \textit{The Big Problem}, supra note 81 (comparing investment practices common amongst small railroads to investment practices of larger railroads).
\end{itemize}
with operating revenues less than $34.7 million. Class 1 railroads, comprised only of North America’s seven largest railroad companies, own and operate large, national railroads, whereas the smaller railroad companies own the short, local railroads. While the seven giant companies can finance the necessary maintenance that their rails require, smaller railroad companies lack sufficient resources to do the same for short line rails.

Montreal, Maine & Atlantic (MMA) was responsible for the freight train that derailed and exploded in Lac-Megantic. Assembled from the bankruptcy assets of four small railroad companies, MMA was a regional railroad company based out of Chicago that struggled since its inception to establish financial stability. Leading up to the tragic events of Lac-Megantic, financial struggles forced MMA to reduce staff and maintenance efforts. According to statements investigators took from MMA employees, MMA used second-hand locomotives to transport Bakken crude oil and elected to “lower[ ] the speed limit instead of repairing the tracks.”

The troubling circumstances surrounding the Lac-Megantic derailment are not unique to MMA; other small railroads face similar problems. In less than one year, two trains carrying oil de-

83. See Rail: Conditions & Capacity, supra note 69 (listing three types of rail and what type of company primarily owns each classification).
84. See id. (explaining that short line railroads are maintained by small railroad companies).
86. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (assessing financial stability of small railroad company that owned train that derailed in Lac-Megantic). MMA was a regional railroad, and costs associated with the fall-out from the Lac-Megantic tragedy bankrupted MMA. See id.
87. See id. (explaining formation and economic instability of MMA).
88. See id. (discussing cutbacks MMA made).
90. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (assessing dangers in allowing small railroad companies to transport oil). Large Class 1 railroad companies are not immune to oil car derailments. See Tracie Mauriello, Railroads, Regulators Adopt Curbs on Shipping Crude Oil, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Feb. 21, 2014, 11:46 PM), http://www.post-gazette.com/news/transportation/2014/02/22/
railed in western Alabama, one in November 2013 and the other in June 2014. Both derailments happened just west of Tuscaloosa, on railroads owned by small companies. The more troubling of the derailments was the November 2013 derailment in Aliceville, Alabama. A small railroad company, Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway (AGR), owned the train that derailed while traversing a small wooden trestle in Aliceville; the resulting oil spill was the worst derailment oil spill in the history of the United States. Like MMA, financial troubles and inconsistent management plagued AGR. While an inability to invest in the maintenance of the trestle is the likely cause of the derailment, it is impossible to determine whether AGR adequately maintained the trestle because the derailment caused a fire and burned the trestle to ash.

Additional concerns exist regarding the sufficiency of the insurance that railroad companies carry. Gennesee & Wyoming, one of the nation’s largest and most successful regional and short line railroad companies, is insured for liability up to 500 million


91. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (discussing November 2013 derailment); see also Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (discussing June 2014 derailment).

92. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (discussing derailment on wooden trestle owned by Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway); see also Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (discussing derailment near M&O bridge in Tuscaloosa, Alabama).


94. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (stating conditions under which train derailed).

95. See id. (comparing MMA and AGR’s similar struggles with obtaining consistent investments and management). AGR never had a consistent source of capital or leadership because railroad holding companies routinely bought and sold AGR. See id. As such, the railroad company’s ownership was constantly changing, leading to unpredictable changes in management and varying degrees of capital to invest in maintaining its infrastructure. See id.

96. See id. (determining conclusive information regarding state of trestle would likely be impossible to discover in wreckage).

97. See id. (analyzing insurance’s effect on transporting oil by rail).
dollars. A typical short line railroad company will be insured up to twenty million dollars. The estimated cost of rebuilding Lac-Megantic, however, is 2.7 billion dollars. If Gennesee & Wyoming was the company responsible for the accident and were to use up its entire insurance policy and liquidate all of its assets, it would still be 600 million dollars shy of the total liability cost. Therefore, non-Class 1 railroad companies are simply not capitalized sufficient enough to protect themselves from liability of carrying oil. The Lac-Megantic accident left MMA bankrupt, forcing the Canadian government to step in and cover much of the costs associated with the accident.

C. The DOT-111 Tanker Car: A Known Danger

Critics cite the DOT-111 tank car as the most dangerous elements of transporting oil by rail. The DOT-111 debuted in the 1960s as a tanker for transporting corn syrup and other nonflammable cargo. As such, the tanker’s design is inherently unsuitable for transporting flammable cargo such as Bakken crude oil. In 1991, after decades of use, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued numerous warnings regarding the tendency of the DOT-111’s shell to puncture in derailments. Notwithstanding the NTSB’s findings, the ethanol industry continues to use DOT-111 tankers, even after a derailment in 2009 caused a deadly fire.

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98. See id. (detailing value of Gennesse & Wyoming’s insurance policy).
99. See Marina Villeneuve, After ‘End of the World’ Explosion, Lac-Megantic Aims to Rebuild, PORTLAND PRESS HERALD (Apr. 17, 2014), http://www.pressherald.com/2014/04/17/after-end-of-the-world-explosion-lac-megantic-aims-to-rebuild/ (discussing insurance policies common for small railroad companies traveling short distances). A twenty-five million dollar policy is typically the maximum available policy for short-line railroad companies. See id. This is the type of policy that MMA had. See id.
100. Id. (estimating cost of rebuilding Lac-Megantic).
101. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (valuing Gennesse & Wyoming and its insurance policy at 2.1 billion dollars).
102. See id. (discussing industry’s general lack of preparation to deal with major accident liability).
103. See Villeneuve, supra note 99 (discussing financial consequences of Lac-Megantic accident).
104. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (analyzing in depth issues surrounding DOT-111).
105. See id. (discussing origins of DOT-111).
106. See id. (noting DOT-111 does not lend tanker to carrying flammable cargo).
107. See id. (discussing NTSB warnings regarding dangers DOT-111 posed).
108. See id. (criticizing continued use of DOT-111s despite NTSB warnings that tanker was unsafe for transporting hazardous materials).
The 2009 derailment led the NTSB to comment on the DOT-111’s “need for extra protection such as head shields, tank jackets, more robust top fittings protection, and modification of bottom outlet valves on DOT-111 tank cars used to transport hazardous materials.”109 The DOT-111’s head shields lack adequate protection for transporting hazardous materials because in their current state, they are prone to massive puncturing if the couplers break off upon collision.110 The steel shell of the DOT-111 is less than 1/2-inch thick, whereas modern tanker cars have a 9/16-inch jacket.111 In the event of a DOT-111 rolling over during derailment, the insufficiently shielded top valve and fittings of the DOT-111 are susceptible to opening up and spilling the tanker’s cargo.112 In addition to the flaws that the NTSB enumerated, “the draft sill, which connects the tank to the wheels, may fail in derailments, causing the tank to tear” and subsequently dump its cargo.113 A tank car so prone to leaking its cargo is ill-equipped to carry hazardous cargo, especially considering the flammability of the cargo.114

Unforeseen demand for tank cars is in part responsible for the oil industry’s use of the decades-old DOT-111.115 The rail industry could not have predicted the United States’ recent oil boom and the oil industry’s subsequent reliance on rail to transport such large volumes of crude oil.116 As such, the rail industry did not have tankers designed to carry such hazardous material readily available; what it did have was the DOT-111.117 Although the DOT-111 was the only available tanker, the rail industry was already well aware of the dangers it posed.118 Over the years, the oil industry has ac-

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109. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting NTSB’s comment on DOT-111’s design and necessary modifications to make tanker safer).
110. Robbins, supra note 4 (detailing flaw in DOT-111 head shield); see also Weather Films, supra note 15 (discussing unsafe design of DOT-111).
111. Eaton, supra note 8 (comparing old DOT-111 to modern tank cars).
112. Robbins, supra note 4 (detailing flaw in DOT-111’s top valve).
113. Id. (listing DOT-111’s design flaws).
114. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (discussing violent danger transporting Bakken crude oil by rail poses).
115. See id. (attributing oil industry’s use of DOT-111 to sudden and significant demand for tankers).
116. See id. (commenting how unexpected recent North American oil boom was).
117. See id. (explaining how unexpected boom led to reliance on transportation equipment ill equipped to transfer explosive material).
quired modern tankers, but approximately seventy-eight thousand original-design DOT-111s are still in active use. 119

The DOT-111 has many design flaws that pose a grave danger to the environment and to citizens of towns that DOT-111 tanks pass through, but it can be retrofitted to compensate for its flaws. 120 In the aftermath of Lac-Megantic, companies such as GBW Railcar Services have formed to serve as tanker car repair shops, ensuring that tankers are in sufficient operating condition and that DOT-111s are adequately updated. 121 While the means to retrofit the dangerous DOT-111 exist, the oil industry is hesitant to invest in such precautions. 122 The estimated cost of retrofitting all DOT-111s still in use is one billion dollars, which is undoubtedly a sizable investment; nevertheless, one billion dollars is still less than half the cost of rebuilding Lac-Megantic and defending the related lawsuits. 123

III. THE DANGERS OF OIL BY RAIL

Transporting oil by rail poses two primary dangers. 124 First, tankers engulfed in flames can cause explosions. 125 Second, spilling crude oil is an environmental hazard. 126

A. Explosive Crude

The derailment at Lac-Megantic is proof that transporting oil by rail poses a serious threat to humans. 127 This explosive threat is two-fold: there is the violence of the initial blast followed by the subsequent fire. 128 Of the Lac-Megantic catastrophe’s forty-seven

119. See Robbins, supra note 4 (providing approximate number of original design DOT-111s still in use).
120. See Eaton, supra note 8 (discussing options for addressing DOT-111 design flaws).
121. See id. (discussing ability to retrofit DOT-111 tankers to comply with modern designs).
122. See id. (noting oil industry’s resistance to investing money in rail safety).
123. See Robbins, supra note 4 (estimating cost of retrofitting all DOT-111 tankers in use); see also Villeneuve, supra note 99 (estimating cost of rebuilding Lac-Megantic to be 2.7 billion dollars).
124. For a general discussion of the two dangers, see infra notes 127-161 and accompanying text.
125. For a discussion of the explosive dangers, see infra notes 127-145 and accompanying text.
126. For a discussion of the environmental dangers, see infra notes 146-161 and accompanying text.
127. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (discussing how Lac-Megantic derailment killed forty-seven people).
128. See Villeneuve, supra note 99 (explaining damage of first initial explosion followed by fire that spread further into town).
victims, five remain missing. The fact that five bodies were never recovered suggests that the initial blast vaporized these victims. The fire that followed the blast did not present as immediate of a threat as the initial explosion, but it is concerning that response teams took two days to put out the fire that burned through Lac-Mégantic. Evidence supports that an initial explosion and subsequent fire can heat the remaining derailed tankers carrying oil to the point of sparking a second wave of explosions.

It is troubling to imagine such a catastrophic event happening in a major urban area, but the reality is that DOT-111 tankers carrying Bakken crude oil travel through major towns and cities. Specifically there are forty-six “federally designated high-threat urban areas” in which these dangerous tankers travel. DOT-111s carry oil through both major cities such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and smaller cities such as Aurora, Illinois, located just outside of Chicago. If a DOT-111 carrying Bakken crude oil were to derail and explode in one of these cities, the damage would be unimaginable. The United States has already come close to suffering its own Lac-Mégantic catastrophe when a train with DOT-111 tankers carrying Bakken crude oil derailed and exploded outside the town of Casselton, North Dakota.

129. Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (noting that five victims are still missing).
130. See id. (stating Lac-Mégantic explosion vaporized five of the forty-seven victims).
132. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (explaining how burning oil tankers act as “blow torches” to nearby tankers and thereby trigger another set of explosions). For a further discussion on how burning oil tankers can lead to a chain reaction of exploding oil tankers, see infra notes 144-145. The February of 2015 derailment in West Virginia demonstrated this effect, as there were multiple waves of explosions. See Dan Heyman & Richard Pérez-Peña, Spilled Oil Keeps Flames Burning After a Train Derailment in West Virginia, N.Y. Times (Feb. 17, 2015), http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/18/us/west-virginia-train-derailment-dumps-oil-into-river.html (describing terror residents felt after witnessing multiple waves of explosions).
133. See Mauriello, supra note 90 (recognizing federally designated threat zones).
134. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (discussing urban and metropolitan areas that tankers carrying oil travel through).
135. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (listing densely populated areas in which tankers carrying oil pass through). In January 2014, a tanker carrying oil derailed on a bridge crossing the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia; fortunately, the derailment did not result in a spill. See Glover et al., supra note 90.
136. See Weather Films, supra note 15 (expressing fear that Lac-Mégantic level explosion could happen in more densely populated areas).
137. See Krauss & Mouawad, supra note 9 (reporting on oil explosion outside of Casselton). The derailment, which occurred just one half mile outside the small
The unique properties of Bakken crude oil contribute to violent explosions. Not all crude oil is the same, and “Bakken’s [crude oil] is more like gasoline and rich in volatile natural gas liquids, including methane, ethane, propane and butane.” When refineries process crude oil, they separate out the crude oil from the natural gases. North Dakota, however, lacks the capacity to refine all of its Bakken crude oil in-state, and thus ships its excess via rail to refineries along the Gulf Coast. During transport to the south, “the natural gas liquids separate from the oil and become gaseous, forming an explosive propane-butane blanket on top of the oil.” If the “blanket” were to ignite, as would occur if a tanker derails and sparks the gas, the tanker would explode. The flames from the initial explosion would heat nearby tankers to extreme temperatures and, as the flames spread, would trigger a chain of exploding tankers. As trains are getting longer, and thus linking more and more oil tankers, a derailment could potentially cause incredible damage.

B. Environmental Concerns

Trains carrying oil that derail also pose a significant risk to the environment. In 2013, American trains spilled 1.5 million gallons of oil; this is more than the amount spilled in the preceding town of Casselton, North Dakota, resulted in a fiery explosion and forced the evacuation of the town. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (linking properties of Bakken crude to violence of explosions).

138. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (linking properties of Bakken crude to violence of explosions).

139. Id. (attributing violent explosions to Bakken’s similarity to gasoline and abundance of volatile natural gases).

140. Id. (describing how crude oil gets separated from natural gases).

141. See id. (explaining why Bakken crude oil is not separated from natural gases when it ships out of North Dakota).

142. Id. (describing how Bakken crude oil becomes explosive).

143. See Stern & Jones, supra note 1 (discussing how sparks and punctured tankers could trigger explosion).

144. See id. (explaining how one explosion could trigger chain of explosions by acting as “blow torch” to nearby tankers). Stern and Jones explain this phenomenon as follows:

If a railcar ruptures—and if some of the gas comes into contact with the outside air and a spark occurs—the railcar will explode and act as a blow torch on the car next to it. The result is a series of explosions like those captured on cellphones after the Lac-Megantic. . .

Id.

145. See id. (discussing extent of damage that train explosions can cause). A single train can haul as much as three million gallons of oil, which is “enough to fill a football field almost as high as the goal posts.” Id.

146. For a discussion of how train derailments harm the environment, see infra notes 147-161 and accompanying text.
forty-two years combined. In 2013, the worst oil spill resulted from a derailment outside of Aliceville, Alabama. Twenty-six train cars derailed and spilled an estimated 700 thousand gallons of Bakken crude. That was the largest American oil spill from a derailed train on record. While not all derailments spill hundreds of thousands of gallons of crude oil, oil tanker derailments are occurring at an increasingly rapid rate.

Again, Lac-Megantic is an example of how damaging a derailment can be, as that train spilled 1.6 million gallons of oil. The Lac-Megantic derailment alone spilled more oil than all American tankers combined in 2013. Oil spilled into the surrounding soil, the Chaudière River, and the town’s sewer system. Officials estimate the derailment contaminated 12.3 million gallons of water and between twelve thousand and twenty-two thousand cubic meters of soil. The Quebec government values Lac-Megantic’s environmental cleanup cost at 200 million dollars.

Waterways in particular are susceptible to environmental contamination from crude oil spills. The nation’s more prominent

147. See Robbins, supra note 4 (discussing amount of oil spilled since 1971).
148. See id. (discussing Aliceville oil spill in comparison to other oil spills).
149. Id. (detailing Aliceville oil spill).
150. See de Place & Feldman, The Big Problem, supra note 81 (distinguishing Aliceville oil spill as United States’ worst).
151. See Joby Warrick, Trains Are Carrying – and Spilling – a Record Amount of Oil, WASH. POST (Feb. 17, 2015), http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/02/17/trains-are-carrying-and-spilling-a-record-amount-of-oil/ (analyzing sharp increase in number of oil spills attributed to train derailments in 2013 and 2014 compared to previous twenty-five years). In 2014, 141 trains derailed and resulted in an oil spill. See id. In comparison, from 1975 to 2012, the average number of train derailments resulting in oil spills was twenty-five per year. See id.
152. See Villeneuve, supra note 99 (discussing how much oil was spilled in Lac-Megantic).
153. See Robbins, supra note 4 (comparing Lac-Megantic derailment to American oil spills in 2013).
155. See Villeneuve, supra note 99 (quantifying impact of oil spill on Lac-Megantic water); see also Beaudin, supra note 154 (quantifying impact of oil spill on Lac-Megantic soil). Experts attribute oil’s pervasive permeation into Lac-Megantic’s waters to its infiltration of Lac-Megantic’s sewer system. See Beaudin, supra note 154.
156. See Beaudin, supra note 154 (estimating costs of environmental cleanup for Lac-Megantic to be at least 200 million dollars).
157. See Curtis Tate, Lynchburg, Va., Oil Train Derailment Illustrates Threat to Rivers, MCCLATCHY DC (May 2, 2014), http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/05/02/
railroads typically run along waterways because the land surrounding waterways offers flatter gradients suitable for railroads using heavy trains. As booming demand for oil forces railroad companies to put additional tankers on each train, trains are becoming heavier and therefore need to travel on the flat railroads lining waterways. Naturally, as more trains carrying crude oil travel along waterways, the risk of a spill contaminating a waterway increases. Contaminated waterways pose not only a threat to local communities near the derailment, but to all other areas downstream from the derailment.

IV. Regulation of Oil by Rail

Both the United States and Canada have initiated regulatory responses to the Lac-Megantic disaster and the growing risk of transporting oil by rail. While both nations plan to phase out the DOT-111 by 2017, neither has offered a comprehensive plan for reducing the risks presented by tank cars and Bakken crude oil. Early proposals, however, indicate Canadian regulators are taking a more aggressive approach to regulation than their American coun-

226425/lynchburg-va-oil-train-derailment.html (discussing exposure of waterways to oils spills from train derailments). Following the derailment in Lynchburg, the environmental watchdog group, Columbia Riverkeeper, called upon state and local governments to follow the lead set by Albany, New York and suspend expansion activity for all rail terminals along waterways. See id.

158. See id. (discussing how important railroads typically run along waterways). The term “grade” refers to the slope of the railroad. See Robert S. McGonigal, Grades and Curves, TRAINS (May 1, 2006), http://trn.trains.com/railroads/abcs-of-railroading/2006/05/grades-and-curves (discussing effects of grade and curve on productivity of trains). Heavier trains are most efficient on a flat gradient, as even a slight rise can add significant resistance to the locomotive. See id.

159. See Tate, supra note 157 (discussing increased dependence on railroads that line waterways).

160. See id. (suggesting that increased use of oil tankers on trains increases risk of contaminating waterways with crude oil).

161. Id. (discussing threat of contamination of water used by towns downstream from derailment).


163. See id. (criticizing Canada’s failure to address routing issues); see also Eric de Place & Rich Feldman, Canada vs. the USA on Oil Train Standards, SIGHTLINE DAILY (Sept. 10, 2014, 6:30 AM), http://daily.sightline.org/2014/09/10/canada-vs-the-usa-on-oil-train-standards/ [hereinafter de Place & Feldman, Canada vs. the USA] (criticizing United States’ failure to address issue of gross under insurance).
In putting forward adequate regulations, both governments face aggressive opposition from the oil and rail industries.\textsuperscript{165}

A. Canada’s Response to Lac-Megantic

Transport Canada is Canada’s rail safety regulator.\textsuperscript{166} In April 2014, Transport Canada prohibited the use of DOT-111 units that had an inherent design flaw in the bottom of the tanker, requiring the rail companies to immediately remove five thousand of the most dangerous units from operation.\textsuperscript{167} The regulator required the remaining DOT-111s produced prior to 2014 to be retrofitted or phased out.\textsuperscript{168} Despite some critics labeling the proposed deadline as unrealistic, Transport Canada has, thus far, defended its aggressive May 2017 deadline for phase out compliance.\textsuperscript{169}

Additionally, Transport Canada focused on regulating train operation.\textsuperscript{170} Investigations into the Lac-Megantic derailment identified two factors leading to the runaway train: a lone, fatigued conductor and a failure of the handbrake system.\textsuperscript{171} As a result, Transport Canada now requires that each train have two conductors and that rail companies better monitor fatigue levels of their conductors.\textsuperscript{172} Additionally, Transport Canada imposed standardized handbrake requirements for trains.\textsuperscript{173}
On June 24, 2015, Canadian Transport Minister Lisa Raitt announced the passage of new regulations contained within the Safe and Accountable Rail Act (SSRA) to address additional concerns regarding oil-by-rail safety. Of these regulations, the most prominent is the new minimum insurance requirements for trains that transport crude oil. Typically, short line railroads carry insurance in the amount of twenty-five million dollars, an amount grossly insufficient for covering the costs of a significant accident involving Bakken crude oil. The SSRA creates two tiers of liability insurance requirements for short line railroads: the lesser requiring 100 million dollars and the greater requiring 250 million dollars. Moreover, railroad companies must now pay a per tonnage fee when shipping crude oil. Fee payments go towards a 250 million dollar fund to pay for damages in excess of the railroad’s insurance policy.

The SSRA also implements further regulations regarding safe rail practices. First, the SSRA expands the Transportation Minister’s authority to order new safety standards and to expand local governments’ access to information regarding trains carrying oil. Providing local governments with access to information mitigates the damage a derailment would cause because first responders are better prepared for such an accident. Second, the SSRA makes revisions to the Safety Management System (SMS) guidelines. A Safety Management System (SMS) is framework for assessing and managing risk within a company’s transportation practices. See Frequently Asked Questions, Transport Canada, https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/railsafety/railsafety-faq-969.html (last visited Oct. 4, 2015). Transport Canada requires railroads to adopt an SMS as part of...
Transport Canada now requires railroad companies to appoint executives responsible for the safety and monitoring of employee fatigue.184 Some critics of oil-by-rail are concerned about the self-regulation of safety standards, but the SSRA also grants protection to whistleblowers.185

B. United States’ Regulation of Oil-by-Rail

In May 2015, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration, finalized a rule regarding the transportation of crude oil by rail.186 The regulation pertains to the phase out of the DOT-111, reduced speed limits, new braking standards, and rail routing assessment requirements.187

The PHMSA plans to phase out use of the DOT-111 for the transportation of crude oil by October 2017.188 Unlike Transport Canada, American regulators have not required the immediate removal of any DOT-111s.189 Moreover, the Final Rule against using the DOT-111 only applies to trains with at least twenty tankers carrying high-hazard cargo.190 To replace the DOT-111, PHMSA has put forward two options: (1) the DOT-117, with a thicker shell, a steel jacket, thermal protection, a head shield, and “electronic-controlled pneumatic brakes”; or (2) the CPC-1232, which addresses an effort to ingrain safety into the daily culture of the railroad. See Winfield, supra note 180.

184. See Winfield, supra note 180 (elaborating on SMS requirements).
185. See id. (voicing concerns over railroad companies self-regulating safety).
187. See Gainey & Thanawala, supra note 186 (listing proposed regulations).
188. See id. (detailing PHSA’s replacements for DOT-111). The October 2017 deadline only applies for the transportation of what the Department of Transportation considers to be the most dangerous of cargo. See Kathryn J. Gainey, Regulatory Update on Transportation of Crude Oil by Rail, Fed. Law., Oct./Nov. 2014, at 10 available at http://www.stepdoc.com/assets/htmldocuments/Transportation%20of%20Crude%20Oil%20By%20Rail.pdf. The phase-out date of the DOT-111 for transporting the least dangerous cargo is October 2020. See id.
189. See de Place & Feldman, Canada vs. the USA, supra note 163 (criticizing United States’ failure to immediately remove dangerous DOT-111s).
190. See id. (identifying loophole allowing continued use of DOT-111 for transportation of crude oil); see also Gainey & Thanawala, supra note 186 (detailing discontinuation of DOT-111).
the issues the DOT-111 had with its bottom release valve. Under the Final Rule, railroads may retrofit their DOT-111s, but retrofitting must bring the DOT-111 up to the standards of the DOT-117.

In addition to the phase out of the DOT-111, the Final Rule reduces speed limits and requires new electronically controlled pneumatic brakes for “single train[s] transporting seventy or more loaded tank cars containing Class 3 flammable liquid.” The regulation limits the maximum speed limit for trains carrying high-hazard cargo to fifty miles per hour. Trains with tank cars that fail to meet the standard are limited to speeds no faster than forty miles per hour. PHMSA also requires that trains be equipped with an “enhanced brake signal propagation system . . . involving end-of-train devices, distributed power systems, or electronic-controlled pneumatic brakes.” The regulation will limit trains that do not comply with the proposed brake standard to a maximum speed of thirty miles per hour.

PHMSA also requires railroads transporting crude oil to “perform routing analyses.” Railroads already perform routing analyses by assessing twenty-seven different factors to determine the “safest, most secure route.” The Final Rule does not require railroads to provide state first responders with a weekly, reasonable estimate of the number of tanker cars carrying crude oil passing through each county.

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191. See Gainey & Thanawala, supra note 186 (describing replacements for DOT-111).
192. See id. (qualifying retrofitting option).
193. See id. (quoting Final Rule in discussion of proposed speed related regulations).
194. See id. (identifying maximum speed allowed for trains carrying crude oil).
195. See Gainey & Thanawala, supra note 186 (limiting speed for trains with tankers that are not up to DOT-117 standard).
196. See id. (discussing PHSA’s new brake system requirements).
197. See id. (assessing consequences of failing to comply with new brake system).
198. See id. (discussing PHMSA’s plans to address issues regarding trains carrying crude oil through populated areas).
199. See Gainey, supra note 188 (defining routing analyses). Railroads already perform routing analyses for other hazardous cargo, such as chlorine. See id.
200. See Gainey & Thanawala, supra note 186 (discussing lack of notification requirement in Final Rule).
C. Rail and Oil Industries’ Reaction to Regulation

In opposition, the oil industry and railroads argue that both Canada and the United States have proposed regulations that would be an unnecessary and costly burden. While there has been a recent rise in the number of oil spills from derailments, the oil and rail industries “stress that 99.998 percent of hazardous rail shipments happen without incident.” Although united in their opposition against new regulations, the oil and rail industries differ when attributing blame for the recent increase in accidents. Oil companies place blame on their rail industry cohorts, citing human error and track deficiencies. The rail industry, on the other hand, is split between blaming railroads and railcar producers. Railroads counter the oil industry’s claim by blaming the combustibility of crude oil, and turns on the railcar industry by questioning the “crashworthiness of tank cars.”

Both the oil and rail industries debate the reasonableness of the phase out timelines for the DOT-111. Industry surveys estimate only fifteen thousand of the fifty thousand DOT-111s in use can be retrofitted by 2017. The estimate appears low because the DOT-111 requires such extensive retrofitting. If the estimate is accurate, railroads will have to phase out approximately thirty-five

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202. See id. (discussing overall safety improvements of oil by rail).


204. See id. (explaining oil industry’s understanding of rail accidents).

205. See id. (discussing differing interests within rail industry between railroads and tanker producers).

206. See id. (detailing stance of railroads against regulation).

207. See id. (questioning whether timeline for phase-out is reasonable). Railroads do not want to incur the costs that a phase-out of the DOT-111 would require. See id. The oil industry does not want the added costs for railroads to raise shipping rates. See id. Railcar producers stand to financially gain from the phase-out, either by selling new tank cars or by providing retrofitting services for old DOT-111s. See Eaton, supra note 8. Still, the Railway Supply Institute argues that the rail industry will not be able to phase-out or retrofit DOT-111s by the end of 2017. See Eaton, supra note 8. This argument is not shared by the entire railcar producing industry, as Greenbrier Cos. has labeled the phase-out timetable as “tight but achievable.” See Cook et al., supra note 203.

208. See Eaton, supra note 8 (detailing Railway Supply Institute’s estimates).

209. See id. (listing retrofitting requirements for DOT-111).
thousand DOT-111s within the next three years. The oil industry and railroads are concerned that such a dramatic decline in available tank cars would also result in a proportionate decline in the transportation of oil by rail.

Railroads further object to reducing speed limits. They are concerned that slower travel speeds for trains carrying oil will result in reduced efficiency throughout the industry’s entire network. A significant delay in train traffic could delay delivery of other goods and result in higher shipping costs. Moreover, railroads question whether reduced speeds are necessary, as derailments have resulted in oil leaks even when trains were traveling at reduced speeds.

V. The Future of Oil by Rail

The transportation of oil by rail raises two primary future concerns: (1) whether the practice is sufficiently regulated; and (2) whether the practice will continue to have such a large presence in the oil industry. Concerns regarding regulation have risen as derailments in early 2015 have cast doubt as to the adequacy of Transport Canada and PHMSA’s regulations for tank cars. These derailments have reignited the debate over oil by rail, especially in the context of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Although both the United States and Canada are taking steps towards implementing new regulations, recent evidence suggests that both nations’ proposals may be insufficient to properly address

210. See id. (discussing phase out of DOT-111).
211. See id. (highlighting concerns of oil industry and railroads).
212. See Cook et al., supra note 203 (discussing railroads’ concerns over reducing speed of train traffic).
213. See id. (explaining railroads are concerned about efficiency if speeds are lowered).
215. See id. (listing numerous oil spills that resulted from derailments of trains traveling at slower speeds as part of argument presented by those who do not believe that reduced speed limits may be ineffective in reducing number of oil spills).
216. For a further discussion of the ongoing issues regarding transporting crude oil in North America, see infra notes 217-251 and accompanying text.
217. For a further discussion of potential inadequacies of Transport Canada’s and PHMSA’s regulatory solutions, see infra notes 219-229 and accompanying text.
218. For a discussion of the recent derailments that reignited debate over the safety of oil by rail and the Keystone XL Pipeline, see infra notes 223-229 and accompanying text.
the issues of transporting oil in North America. In February 2015, two derailments, only days apart, resulted in an oil spill, fire, and explosion. On February 14, 2015, a train derailed in Ontario, partially puncturing nineteen of the twenty-five tankers and spilling an estimated 260,000 gallons of oil. On February 17, 2015, just three days later, a train of 109 tanker cars derailed in West Virginia; nineteen of the twenty-six tankers that derailed caught fire, forcing nearby residents to evacuate.

Both trains that derailed were using the CPC-1232 tank car. Transport Canada and PHMSA have both proposed replacing the DOT-111 with the CPC-1232. These February spills and resulting fires are evidence that Transport Canada and PHMSA’s regulatory measures may be insufficient. While the CPC-1232 may address the bottom pressure release valve issues of the DOT-111, it does not address the inadequacies of the DOT-111’s thin steel shell, as both have 7/16-inch shells. Further, the leaks and fires in West Virginia and Ontario are not the first involving the CPC-1232. In April 2014, prior to the PHMSA’s notice of proposed rulemaking, a

219. For a discussion of the recent evidence, see infra notes 220-229 and accompanying text.
220. See Edward McAllister, Derailed CSX Train in West Virginia Hauled Newer-Model Tank Cars, REUTERS (Feb. 17, 2015, 5:18 PM), http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/17/us-usa-train-derailment-csx-idUSKBN0LK1ST20150217 (detailing two oil-by-rail accidents that occurred within three days of each other).
222. See Heyman & Pérez-Peña, supra note 132 (detailing derailment in West Virginia).
223. See McAllister, supra note 220 (identifying tank car in West Virginia derailment); see also Gillies, supra note 221 (identifying tank car in Ontario derailment).
224. See Gillies, supra note 221 (discussing Canada’s regulatory support of CPC-1232). For a discussion of PHMSA’s proposed replacement tank cars, see supra note 191 and accompanying text.
225. See Gillies, supra note 221 (raising questions regarding Canada’s regulation of tank cars carrying crude oil); see also James West, Trains Hauling Crude Oil Across North America Just Keep Exploding, MOTHER JONES (Feb. 17, 2015, 2:18 PM), http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2015/02/train-derailment-crude-oil-explosion-west-virginia (criticizing proposed rules that recommend CPC-1232 models instead of DOT-111 models).
226. See West, supra note 225 (comparing shell thickness of DOT-111 and CPC-1232 models to proposed shells designed with thicker walls).
227. See id. (describing West Virginia and Lynchburg, Virginia derailments, in which both trains were pulling CPC-1232 tankers).
train using CPC-1232 tankers derailed in Lynchburg, Virginia.228 There, the tankers caught fire, leaked oil, and fell into the James River.229

Debate over the transportation of crude oil escalated in February 2015.230 On February 24, 2015, one week after the derailment in West Virginia, President Obama vetoed the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline.231 For Americans, then, there is a battle over determining how oil, particularly Bakken crude, should be transported.232

Both transportation of oil via rail and pipelines have risks that can result in oil spills.233 Rail is far more likely to have an accident resulting in an oil leak.234 In 2013, transport by rail resulted in over four hundred accidents per billion barrels of oil, while pipelines annually average twenty-two accidents per billion barrels of oil transported.235 While four hundred accidents may seem high, in 2011, rail resulted in over seven hundred accidents.236
The unpredicted and sudden demand for oil by rail can explain this high accident rate.237 The decline in accidents from 2001 to 2013, however, could be representative of the rail industry gaining more experience in transporting such high volumes of crude oil.238 Transportation by rail may be more prone to accidents generally, but pipeline accidents typically leak more oil.239 Although pipeline accidents may be “bigger” in the sense that they leak more oil, they lack the explosive capacity that accompanies derailments.240

When assessing what mode of transportation of crude oil is most appropriate, economic factors must be considered in addition to weighing the risks of rail versus pipeline distribution.241 Even if transportation by way of rail was the more dangerous option, it would still be the more immediately accessible option.242 The reason why rail has been used to transport Bakken crude oil is because the pipeline infrastructure in North Dakota, and in other parts of the nation, is insufficient to meet the demand for refined oil.243 Building a pipeline infrastructure is costly and requires regulatory oversight.244 The ongoing debate over the Keystone XL Pipeline establishes political uncertainty.245 In comparison, North America’s railroad infrastructure is already expansive enough to transport oil from wells to refineries.246 North American pipelines cover only fifty-seven thousand miles, while railroads cover 140

237. See id. (hypothesizing rail industry’s lack of preparation for demand from oil industry could correlate to high accident rate in recent years).
238. See Ingraham, supra note 233 (analyzing reasons for increases and decreases in trends in rail accidents).
239. See id. (comparing rail and pipeline by gallons of oil spilled). In 2013, rail spilled far more oil per billion barrels of oil transported than pipeline, but the amount of oil spilled by rail was uncharacteristically high due to major spills in Aliceville, Alabama and Casselton, North Dakota. See id.
240. See id. (concluding oil transportation via rail is more dangerous than oil transportation via pipeline).
241. For a discussion of the economic differences between transporting oil by rail or pipeline, see infra notes 242-248 and accompanying text.
242. See Silverstein, supra note 230 (discussing rail’s advantage over pipeline in regions that are experiencing North American oil boom).
243. See id. (explaining that pipelines are not used to transport Bakken Crude because producers are unable to build pipelines to meet high demand).
244. See id. (detailing barriers to pipeline expansion).
246. See Silverstein, supra note 230 (noting expansive nature of ground railroads as compared to limited coverage of pipelines).
thousand miles.\textsuperscript{247} Rail has the advantage of being immediately accessible to the oil industry, making it a cheaper and more certain option.\textsuperscript{248}

With the future of the Keystone XL pipeline becoming more uncertain, the increased use of rail to transport oil becomes more likely.\textsuperscript{249} Although concerns and resulting regulations regarding the transportation of oil by rail have risen since the 2015 derailments, much more needs to be accomplished.\textsuperscript{250} The oil and rail industries will continue to use the DOT-111 tanker into 2017, and there are significant concerns that the replacement tankers will continue to pose the same risks, allowing for continued dangers.\textsuperscript{251}

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\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{247} See Conca, supra note 78 (explaining that railroad track is currently more expansive than crude oil pipeline coverage in United States).

\textsuperscript{248} See id. (noting that adapting railroads to oil industry’s needs by building new terminals and constructing new railroads is less expensive than expanding pipeline coverage).

\textsuperscript{249} See Eaton, supra note 8 (discussing American Petroleum Institute’s argument that failure to approve Keystone XL pipeline requires further investment in rail).

\textsuperscript{250} See Silverstein, supra note 230 (discussing growing interest in oil by rail). For a further discussion of the growing interest in oil by rail, see supra notes 230-232 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{251} See de Place & Feldman, \textit{Canada vs. the USA}, supra note 163 (criticizing both United States and Canada for not immediately banning all DOT-111s from transporting Bakken crude oil). For a discussion of why the replacement tankers will continue to pose concerns, see supra notes 219-229 and accompanying text.

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