



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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DATCP and PSC Voice Support for Federal Rail Energy Transportation Advisory Committee

MADISON – Today the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) endorsed creation of a Rail Energy Transportation Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee would provide independent advice and policy suggestions on rail transportation of energy commodities to the federal entity that oversees railroads, the Surface Transportation Board.

“A Rail Energy Transportation Advisory Committee could be one important step if the Surface Transportation Board uses the advisory committee as an opportunity to create a meaningful dialogue on the challenges in the rail industry and as a mechanism to produce real results,” PSC Chairperson Dan Ebert said.

In 2005, rail line problems curtailed coal shipments which increased energy costs as Wisconsin utilities had to burn more costly fuels. In addition to service problems, rail costs are increasing dramatically for Wisconsin utilities and played a significant role in increasing some utilities’ electric rates this year.

“Reliable rail service is equally as critical to Wisconsin’s growing biofuel industry,” DATCP Secretary Rod Nilsestuen said. “Timely and adequate service is essential to transport feedstocks for processing and move products to markets and should be a major focus for the Rail Energy Transportation Advisory Committee.”

Last fall, the PSC and DATCP held public listening sessions across the state to hear first hand from Wisconsin shippers regarding increasing rail costs and rail service issues. “Based on what we heard at the public forums last fall, we recommend that the advisory committee should look at ways to make it easier for smaller shippers to have access to the Surface Transportation Board process in setting rates and explore procedures to expedite shippers’ complaints before the Board,” Chairperson Ebert explained.

In March, the Surface Transportation Board asked for comments on the creation of a Rail Energy Transportation Advisory Committee. The two Wisconsin agencies jointly sent comments to the Board in support of creating the new advisory committee and recommended it include a Wisconsin representative.

“Rail transportation is so important to energy reliability and to the viability of our growing biofuel industry in Wisconsin that there needs to be a Wisconsin voice on this important advisory committee,” DATCP Secretary Nilsestuen pointed out.

To read the letter that the PSC and DATCP sent to the Surface Transportation Board, please visit the PSC’s website at: http://psc.wi.gov/apps/erf_share/view/viewdoc.aspx?docid=73157.

For more information about the listening sessions that the PSC and DATCP held last year, please visit the PSC’s website at: <http://psc.wi.gov/railroadhearings/index-railroadhearings.htm>.

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