



**TOWN OF WESTFORD  
OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER**

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March 7, 2014

Congresswoman Niki Tsongas  
11 Kearney Square  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Lowell, MA 01852

Dear Congresswoman Tsongas:

This letter is to alert you and other state and federal officials of the Board of Selectmen's, other Westford officials', residents', and my ongoing concerns regarding the Pan Am Railways trains that travel through our town daily, crossing several miles of our aquifer, and are left idling in our town at a location adjacent to our aquifer and in a residential area. Numerous attempts have been made by our town officials over the past several years to address with Pan Am our public health, public safety, and environmental concerns regarding this ongoing issue, and there has been no improvement.

On February 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am Westford's Fire Chief Joe Targ discovered that Pan Am had experienced a train derailment at the Bridge Street overpass. At least two of these train cars were very close to the edge of an approximately 15ft steep embankment, in a densely populated neighborhood, adjacent to our public water supply. Chief Targ noticed the train derailment as he drove by the scene – we were never notified of the accident by Pan Am. Fire Chief Targ and I, accompanied by our town staff, immediately went to the scene. At first we were unable to find the General Manager, and the Pan Am employees at the accident scene were not helpful. We made numerous calls to Pan Am Executive Vice President, Cynthia Scarano, but we were told that she was in a meeting all day, and we still have not received a return phone call. When we located Luke McCaul, General Manager for Pan Am at the scene, he immediately called the police to charge us with trespassing, even though I identified myself and the Fire Chief (who was in uniform) as soon as we found him. We informed him when he ordered us off their property that we had every right to be there because of the threat of a hazardous incident.

Mr. McCaul informed us that 14 cars had derailed the night before (approximately 11:00 pm). We noticed that two of the cars on and next to the bridge contained non-odorized Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG). We inquired of Mr. McCaul if they had been checked for leaks. He replied they had and were not leaking. We took pictures (attached) and spoke at length with Mr. McCaul about the procedure to get the tanker cars safely back on the tracks and inquired about the risks involved with righting the cars.

Immediately after assessing the situation, our Emergency Management team met to review our evacuation/emergency response plans and be prepared to act - specifically in case one of the train cars fell over or was damaged while getting back on the tracks. We sent a police officer to close Bridge Street (directly underneath the bridge with the derailed tanker cars) and we posted a

firefighter at the scene to alert us to when they started the process, as the General Manager was less than direct with his answers to my questions.

We sent a Reverse 911 call to the residents within ½ mile, sent officers door-to-door in the immediate adjacent area, notified the management staff and residents in an elderly housing complex in near proximity, arranged for buses in the event of evacuation, and had two schools on standby as shelters. All of these mitigation efforts were at a cost to the town.

Sometime around 12:30pm, Pan Am began the process of dragging the tanker cars across the bridge and further down the tracks to right the cars back on the tracks. We had a fire truck present, along with officials from the DEP and EPA. Although Pan Am was successful in getting the cars back on the tracks about 2:30pm, we have obvious concerns about not being notified of this derailment, particularly because of the hazardous product in the cars and the location of the derailment. Being faced with the potential for that level of an emergency with no advance warning is alarming to us. If one of the cars containing LPG had been or was damaged when they tried to get them on the tracks, we would have been faced with an extreme emergency without warning.

The Selectmen, our Emergency Management team and I feel the inaction of Pan Am following this train derailment is irresponsible and unacceptable, particularly in view of the potential for a hazardous materials release or another catastrophic event. We are extremely concerned that Pan Am officials evidently feel they can conduct their business quite independently, with few apparent controls, accountability or consequences for their inactions.

This event also drew attention to our ongoing concerns regarding the conditions of the train tracks and the structural integrity of the Bridge Street overpass. It does not appear that the bridge or the tracks are maintained as well as they should be considering the valuable natural resources that Pan Am travels through while transporting hazardous materials, and the close proximity of the tracks to our residents. I have been sent a link to a video posted online, apparently showing Pan Am trains and train track conditions in Westford, with a prediction in September 2013 of a train derailment, which is available at the following web address:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TzEC7d\\_saU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TzEC7d_saU). I have also attached pictures of the derailed tanker cars and a map showing the area of the incident for your perusal.

What can be done to help us receive better communication from Pan Am, and force them to take appropriate safety precautions to protect our residents and our aquifer? Please let me know how you may assist us as we seek to protect our residents and public water supply from any future occurrences. Thank you for any assistance you can provide us with.

Sincerely,



Jodi Ross  
Town Manager



