

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

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July 30, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

Today I am writing to you regarding a pending special permit application under consideration by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration for the Keystone XL Pipeline. I support the Keystone XL Pipeline. However, I am very concerned that the conditions proposed in the special permit application do not take critical steps to protect Montana's citizens and resources, nor does the process envisioned by PHMSA to consider this application ensure adequate opportunity for public input. I urge you to take steps to ensure that the Keystone XL Pipeline take appropriate steps to protect Montanans and our natural resources.

I understand that the permit application under consideration requests the use of thinner pipe in "low consequence areas." It is unclear how these low consequence areas will be identified and what criteria will be used to make that determination. Such a designation must take into account the unique characteristics of a rural state like Montana where lives, property, and resources are just as valuable as urban locations with higher population densities. In addition, it is unclear how this request will be reviewed by PHMSA and how the public will be engaged in this process. Finally, regardless of the thickness of pipe used in the Keystone XL pipeline, it is imperative that a robust emergency and spill response plan is fully developed and made available for public review and comment prior to the issuance of any permits. The Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico has amply demonstrated that a lack of planning and preparedness for unexpected spill events can have disastrous consequences.

Therefore, I ask you to work with PHMSA to ensure that the special permit application for the Keystone XL pipeline that is under review is available for public review and comment and analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS.) In addition, I urge you to take steps to ensure that your review regarding the proposal to use thinner pipe in “low consequence areas” recognizes that lives, property, and resources in rural Montana deserve the same protections available to any urban area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Bunker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cc: Cynthia Quarterman (PHMSA Administration)

Jeff Weise (Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety)