

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

June 30, 2023

Mr. Alan H. Shaw
Chief Executive Office
Norfolk Southern Railway
650 W. Peachtree Street NW,
Atlanta, GA 30308

Dear Mr. Shaw:

I write to draw attention to the issue of Norfolk Southern trains idling and blocking local traffic in Chautauqua County, New York. Community reports detail multiple incidents of trains parked on Klondike Road – a no outlet road located in the Town of Ripley – and Forest Avenue, a dead-end road in Westfield, restricting local residents from their normal, and necessary day-to-day activities. To that end, I call on you to promptly work with local leaders to identify a viable long-term solution for this recurring issue so that locals are not restricted from commuting to and from work, school, and accessing or providing any emergency response services.

As of late, residents in Chautauqua County have detailed several occasions where Norfolk Southern trains have stopped on the dead-end road of Klondike, trapping locals in or from their homes for upwards of eight hours. Similar complaints have been shared by residents who live on Forest Avenue in Westfield. Not only is this impeding upon residents' daily lives, but these recurring stoppages on Klondike Road and Forest Avenue also pose a number of public safety risks. Residents are rightly concerned that, should there be a medical or public emergency, the long-term idling or stoppage of Norfolk Southern trains would prevent emergency service professionals from servicing the community. I share and echo these concerns, and call on you to ensure the health and safety of these neighborhoods remains top of mind.

While there has been a recent uptick in reports of Norfolk Southern trains blocking residential life in Chautauqua County, this is by no means a new frustration experienced by residents. Local news articles from 2018 detail similar blockages of Klondike Road for hours, and highlights several testimonies of impacted and frustrated residents and emergency service providers who were forced to resort to inconvenient and unsafe means around the stopped trains.¹ Similar frustrations have been echoed by residents in Westfield, with one concerned resident sharing larger safety concerns noting that on multiple occasions, they had called the Norfolk Southern

¹ <https://www.post-journal.com/news/local-news/2018/03/ripley-residents-express-frustration-over-stopped-trains/>

emergency number listed at railroad crossings to report parked trains, with no answer or help from staff.²

In response to recent WKBW's reporting on the issue, a spokesperson from your company shared, "Wherever there is a more acute, recurring issue, we engage with local communities to identify long-term solutions." Ripley and Westfield residents would agree that the continuing stoppage of Norfolk Southern trains presents an acute and recurring issue. Please work with both of the towns and local leaders to determine necessary steps to mitigate any emergency or daily disruption caused by train stoppage.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

² <https://www.wkbw.com/news/local-news/the-follow-up/a-blatant-disregard-of-rural-communities-parked-trains-block-dead-end-westfield-neighborhood>