

# ELECTRIFICATION OF RAIL ROADS

Railroad companies were drawn deeply into the fossil fuel economy when the US government created the Interstate Highway system. The creation of a publicly subsidized highway infrastructure was a major cause of high value freight abandoning trains for trucks. Coal was the customer that saved the railroads.

Today the rail industry is troubled by the coal and oil downturns, which is driven by many factors including tighter environmental rules. Coal power is being replaced by lower cost natural gas, which is in its own way a troubling development. Much of the gas is fracked, polluting water tables and leaking powerful climate-warming gas methane into the atmosphere. Cheap gas prices masks costs not accounted on balance sheets.

The dependency of rail companies on heavy commodities did away with regular schedules. Freight trains now depart when deemed full. Not having regular work schedules is a systemic cause of a fatigue-plagued, unsafe work environment that endangers workers, our communities and the environment. Because this problem is inherent to the way railroads do business, it is not something that can be negotiated or regulated away.

That risk has until recently been unquestioned, assumed acceptable for lack of an alternative. The nearly catastrophic Mosier, Oregon derailment and explosion of June 2016 fueled a growing public awareness of “bomb trains.” People are asking serious questions about the risks and role of the current freight rail business model. Rail electrification provides a timely alternative to move beyond dependence on bulk fossil fuel transportation.

That alternative embodies a key priority for labor, a concept known as ***Just Transition***. In the transition to a low-carbon world many industries will be disrupted, and many jobs will be eliminated, particularly those associated with fossil fuel industries. ***Just Transition*** strategies aim to shift workers from declining to rising industries such as clean industry.

For the transition to a clean economy to be just, workers and affected communities must enjoy access to new industries and good jobs. Investing in rail electrification and modernization is a ***Just Transition*** strategy.

In a time when reducing fossil fuel use is critical to restore the stability of a disrupted global climate, rail can offer a major transportation option that is powered by clean, renewable energy, ensuring jobs for rail workers and creating new clean energy jobs for displaced fossil fuel industry workers. As we run the trains on electricity, the rail corridors can be made into transmission routes from remote solar and wind resources to metropolitan markets.

Just about everybody will benefit from rail electrification. Through innovative public financing strategies, railroads will gain an infusion of capital to modernize lines. Increased speed and service-time reliability will make rail transport attractive to freight shippers and passengers, while diminishing reliance on bulk fossil fuel shipments. Shippers at every scale will have access to faster, more reliable cross-country freight transport. A new generation of passenger trains will provide fast, reliable and comfortable transportation to millions.

Rural and tribal utilities will be able to sell power generated on their lands, energizing the build-out of renewable energy across the country, with enormous benefits for communities that have been physically and economically stranded in recent decades. Utility customers will gain a reliable supply of renewable energy that can reduce consumer costs while allowing power companies to shut down old fossil-fuel generators.

See **Solutionary Rail: A people-powered campaign to electrify America’s railroads and open corridors to a clean energy future.**

1                   **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF AN ECONOMIC “JUST TRANSITION”**

2                                   **TO A LOW CARBON WORLD**

3   **Whereas** the continued extraction and combustion of fossil fuels such as coal and oil has been scientifically  
4 proven to represent a threat to the environment and the future of the planet; and

5   **Whereas** there is a mass movement domestically and globally to radically reduce the continued use of such  
6 fuels to power economic development; and

7   **Whereas**, other alternative energy sources – wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric – are developing rapidly  
8 and appear to be the wave of the future; and

9   **Whereas**, railroad corporations have traditionally hauled large amounts of fossil fuel – especially coal – but  
10 the future of this traffic appears uncertain or possibly even non-existent within a few decades; and

11 **Whereas**, the burden of shifting from an economy based on fossil fuels to one based upon renewal energy  
12 should not be unfairly born by workers, including railroad workers; and

13 **Whereas**, to ensure that such a transition to alternative energy does not create an economy of low paid jobs  
14 for working people - including railroad workers - whose jobs could conceivably be threatened by such a  
15 transition;

16 **Therefore, Be it Resolved** that **ORGANIZATION** support a “Just Transition” to an economy based upon renewal  
17 and clean energy; and

18 **Be it further Resolved** that **ORGANIZATION** demand that workers who are displaced from environmentally  
19 destructive industries be provided living wage income and benefits through public sector jobs or a universal  
20 basic income; and

21 **Be it Further Resolved** that **ORGANIZATION** demand that fossil fuel extraction dependent regions such as  
22 Montana, Wyoming and Appalachia be locations where investments of alternative energy are made to offset  
23 the economic dislocations that workers and communities would face from such a transition; and

24 **Be it Further Resolved** that **ORGANIZATION** recognize the importance of improvements and upgrades to  
25 infrastructure and recognize the importance trade has to the Washington State economy; that rail and trade  
26 modernization opportunities made today are essential in attracting the trade commodities of tomorrow.

27 **Be it Further Resolved** that **ORGANIZATION** call upon the rail industry and the rail unions to work together to  
28 move away from unsustainable practices - specifically the hauling of environmentally destructive commodities  
29 - and work towards expanding the railroads’ business prospects in areas such as mail, passengers, trailers and  
30 containers, renewal energy components, etc.

31 **Be it Finally Resolved** that this resolution be forwarded to **GOVERNMENT ENTITY** for public policy advocacy.  
32 Announcement of this resolution is to be distributed to media outlets.

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34 **ORGANIZATION** by \_\_\_\_\_ (signature) DATE \_\_\_\_\_