OFFICIAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FILING 312929

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THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.
DOCKET NO. FD 36873

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY — MERGER — NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILROAD

FINAL LETTER OF RUTH L. TINES CONCERNING CHICAGO COMMUNITY IMPACTS, LIFE-SAFETY RISKS AT 911 CRITICAL CROSSINGS, AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Dear Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

I submit this final letter to the Surface Transportation Board as a lifelong citizen of Chicago, a property owner, a taxpayer, a mother, a grandmother, and a veteran railroader. I grew up in Englewood —where I still have family and friends. I have spent my entire life watching freight trains run right through our neighborhoods, past our schools, and across the exact streets our families rely on every single day.

Let me be clear: Americans understand the vital importance of freight railroads. We need the railroads, and we need freight trains to keep this country moving. What America does not need is an unnecessary mega-merger engineered for Wall Street vanity and corporate legacy at the direct expense of our families, taxpayers, shippers, ocean and intermodal, and railroad workers.

I am writing today for the citizens of Chicago, Illinois and the surrounding suburbs, especially in Black, Hispanic, and lower-income neighborhoods across Chicago and the south suburbs where most railyards are located, who are busy working hard just to survive and pay their bills. They do not have millions of dollars to hire corporate lobbyists or teams of Washington attorneys to fight for them. Because our neighborhoods lack that financial and political insulation, massive corporations treat our communities like industrial dumping grounds—concentrating severe noise, toxic diesel exhaust and particulate pollutants from idling locomotives and drayage trucks, gridlock, and street blockages right into our backyards while affluent enclaves are spared.

I am writing for the longevity of our elderly parents and grandparents, and for our infants, teenagers, and young adults who are the future business leaders of America. Every family in these communities deserves safe streets to walk on, clear paths for emergency vehicles, clean air, and a reliable commute to school and work.

When you strip away the glossy corporate presentations, the fundamental questions before this Board are simple: How is this merger good for employment? How is this good for public safety? Looking at the reality on the ground in Chicago, this merger fails on every count.

SINGLE-LINE SERVICE AND THE MYTH OF "SEAMLESS" OPERATIONS

To understand why this merger threatens our communities, we first have to look past the corporate buzzwords. Single-Line Service is a continuous, end-to-end rail route controlled by a single carrier designed to eliminate interline handoffs, reduce transit times, and maximize asset velocity—meaning the speed and efficiency at which freight cars and trains move through a network from origin to destination without sitting idle.

Applicants repeatedly promise a "Seamless" operation. But on the ground, "seamless" is just a PR fantasy word used in a boardroom to describe a multi-billion-dollar operation running on paper spreadsheets, entirely detached from the reality of broken drawbars, dead locomotives, 12,000-foot trains blocking crossings, crew hour-outs, and relentless Murphy's Law (the operational reality that anything that can go wrong in heavy railroading will go wrong).

In their STB filings, the applicants maintain that post-merger operations will achieve unhindered traffic flows. However, true operational seamlessness assumes a controlled laboratory environment of heavy-haul railroading, demanding absolute perfection while slashing crew oversight and stretching infrastructure to near maximum capacity is not an operating plan—it is a guarantee of catastrophic delay.

THE HUMAN TOLL: CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF BLOCKED CROSSINGS, ACCIDENTS, AND LIFE-SAFETY CRISES

Chicago is already the rail chokepoint of North America, and our neighborhoods are already drowning in gridlock and bottleneck congestion. Across the exact corridors owned, dispatched, or heavily traveled by Union Pacific, Norfolk Southern, and their shared switching network—from Brighton Park, Clearing, and Ashburn through Englewood, West Englewood, and Auburn Gresham, down into Dolton, South Holland, and Harvey—mega-trains routinely sever entire neighborhoods in half.

Under this proposed merger, Union Pacific seeks to acquire Norfolk Southern's 25.2% governance stake in the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad while simultaneously increasing its ownership stake in the Belt Railway of Chicago from 8.3% to 33.3%. If this merger is approved, Union Pacific will gain sweeping, unprecedented control over Chicago's core switching arteries. Corporate executives market this consolidation as seamless, yet anyone who has spent decades working in Chicago rail yards knows that running longer, heavier mega-trains through the most congested rail hub in America cannot happen without severe operational bottlenecks.

Union Pacific cannot foresee every breakdown, weather delay, or mechanical failure that will leave mile-long mega-trains stranded across neighborhood streets—and their filings show no serious contingency plan for the emergencies trapped behind those trains.

Over the years, these blockages and operational failures have resulted in documented, tragic consequences across our communities, structured in strict chronological order from earliest to latest:

- **October 1994 (Burnham / South Holland Border Incident):** A 10-year-old boy suffered a traumatic left-arm amputation when struck by an Indiana Harbor Belt / Union Pacific freight train operating directly on the IHB corridor.
- **2012 (Chicago Ridge Youth Amputation):** In *Choate v. Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad Co.* (2012 IL 112948), 12-year-old Dominic Choate walked with friends through a torn fence onto Indiana Harbor Belt switching tracks—the exact switching carrier in which Union Pacific now seeks to acquire Norfolk Southern's stake—and suffered a permanent leg amputation. The Illinois courts highlighted the extreme danger children face around active urban rail lines.
- **2020–2023 (Aggregated Federal & Municipal Crossing Logs):** In 2020, federal authorities began a multi-year reporting period documenting systemic crossing blockages and first-responder delays across Chicago rail corridors, including the Clearing Yard area. Federal crossing logs over this 2020–2023 period document 759 separate reports of blocked first responders at just two crossings—63rd and 65th Streets bordering the Belt Railway's Clearing Yard. During a documented fire response at Argo Community High School, a fire chief was trapped by a stopped freight train at 63rd Street and forced to abandon his vehicle and walk to the scene on foot. Similarly, municipal records in Harvey, Dixmoor, Dolton, and South Holland document trains blocking emergency routes for hours at a time, obstructing ambulance routes to area hospitals including Advocate Christ Medical Center and Ingalls Memorial Hospital.
- **December 2021 (South Suburban Foot Crush / Amputation Incident):** A 13-year-old boy suffered a severe foot crush and permanent amputation injury while trying to cross blocked tracks in the south suburban corridor.

- **December 8, 2021 (Documented Loss of Life):** Public police records and Federal Railroad Administration data confirm that an ambulance transporting 74-year-old Rosemary Newman—who was suffering chest pains—to Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey was forced to detour repeatedly around seven blocked railroad crossings caused by a stationary freight train that held the tracks for over two and a half hours. A drive of less than 2.5 miles that should have taken under seven minutes stretched into 23 minutes, and Ms. Newman was pronounced dead of cardiac arrest shortly after arriving.
- **September 2023 (South Suburban Riverdale & Dolton Border / Thornridge High School):** 15-year-old Christian Thompson, a sophomore at Thornridge High School, was fatally struck just two blocks from his home while attempting to navigate around a freight train blocking his neighborhood crossing.
- **April 2024 (Norfolk Southern Residential Rail Yard Lawsuit):** In a federal lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, a teenage girl (identified as S.M.) lost both legs after attempting to cross over a stationary train inside a residential Norfolk Southern rail yard, where blocked neighborhood crossings left local youth without a safe route between homes, schools, and parks.
- **September 18, 2024 (Barrington Fatal School-Commute Lawsuit):** In a wrongful death lawsuit filed in Cook County Circuit Court, the family of 17-year-old high school student Marin Lacson sued Union Pacific after she was fatally struck while walking across Union Pacific tracks on her way to school, citing prior pedestrian collisions and Union Pacific's failure to install pedestrian gates.
- **Ongoing Daily School Commute Hazards:** Federal incident logs record nearly 1,800 reports in Cook County of pedestrians, including schoolchildren, crawling over, under, or between stationary freight cars just to get to school or home. In the south suburbs, local police have repeatedly had to use squad cars to shuttle stranded middle school students miles around parked trains so children would not risk their lives climbing through railcars.

WINTER GRIDLOCK, SUB-ZERO HAZARDS, AND WALL STREET'S LACK OF CONFIDENCE

When corporate executives talk about seamless traffic, they never have to stand outside in a brutal Chicago winter on the South or Southwest Side, waiting for a stalled 12,000-foot train while the wind chills plummet below zero. Winter on our rails brings snow, ice, sub-zero temperatures, freezing air-brake lines, and frozen switches. These severe winter conditions lead to far more breakdowns for the car department operating with minimal crews, creating deeply unsafe conditions for railroad employees across Chicago. When these mega-trains break down and block critical neighborhood crossings during a blizzard or freezing morning, the human cost skyrockets:

- **Frustrated Drivers and Severe Street Gridlock:** Trapped motorists get stuck in long backup queues on slick, unplowed streets. That endless gridlock creates massive traffic jams across critical corridors already heavily burdened by rail operations.
- **Vulnerable Children and Seniors Left Stranded:** Bitter winter weather turns walking to school or trying to reach a doctor's appointment into a dangerous gauntlet. Investigative records and public safety reports across Chicagoland highlight how children and teenagers navigating around blocked trains in freezing snow are driven to slip on ice or crawl between railcars just to get to class on time. Seniors with limited mobility or without personal vehicles are left stranded in the bitter cold, completely cut off because an oversized train is blocking their only path.
- **Real-World Tragedies in Extreme Weather:** As recorded in public safety archives, winter delays and sub-zero bottlenecks don't just inconvenience drivers; they turn into life-or-death hazards when emergency vehicles cannot navigate frozen, blocked gridlock. Additionally, freezing conditions frequently trigger line-wide disruptions and transit dangers across the region.

Separately, while reviewing emails, an email stood out from the Stop the Rail Merger Coalition dated Friday, November the 13th, and shared with all parties of record, left me appalled. Demanding the names of coalition members and donors through discovery has nothing to do with the merger, rail infrastructure, or the matrix, confirming that corporate threats of retaliation and rate hikes were never a joke when railroads aggressively target citizens and donors in this manner.

CONCLUSION, CPKC MOTION ALIGNMENT AND CLOSING PRAYER

Throughout this entire proceeding—starting with my May 5, 2026 filing detailing employee impacts, retaliatory discipline after reporting unsafe equipment, workplace intimidation, misuse of catch-all rule 1.6, and the hollow promise of "Jobs for Life", which was powerfully corroborated by the July 27 unsealing of suppressed labor data exposing the truth behind those workforce cuts; followed by my September 9, 2026 evidentiary submission establishing the 50-year environmental racism and public health crisis across Chicago's South Side, detailing the severe toxic pollutants and microscopic diesel particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)—officially classified by the U.S. EPA and IARC as a Group 1 Human Carcinogen causing lung cancer and asthma—that our communities already breathe and proving how a mega-merger would make conditions even worse; followed by my November 12 comment addressing the executive retaliatory rate threats made by Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena at the March 2026 SWARS conference; and ending with today's documented localized gridlock, severe traffic bottlenecks, emergency vehicle access risks, life-safety impacts, and crossing blockages affecting both inside and outside the railroad for the public overall—I have stood as a boots-on-the-ground witness to the realities of Class I rail consolidation.

As an independent pro se party of record, over three decades with the railroad, and over 50 years as a Chicagoan, I firmly align my position with the formal motion filed by Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) on October 30, 2026, urging the Surface Transportation Board to reject and terminate this transaction. Temporary regulatory band-aids cannot fix a corporate culture built on top-down executive pride, retaliation, intimidation, and the displacement of working-class communities and union employees.

For all the labor, environmental, health, and national network reasons detailed throughout my filings on May 5, September 9, November 12, and today, I am standing proudly in full alignment with CPKC's motion to terminate, and I respectfully urge the Board to fulfill its public interest mandate under 49 U.S.C. § 11324 and **REJECT AND TERMINATE DOCKET NO. FD 36873 IN ITS ENTIRETY WITH PREJUDICE.**

I RESPECTFULLY OFFER THIS PRAYER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD:

I pray that God gives you wisdom, courage, discernment and peace following your decision—so that you are guided to make the right choice. Not my choice, not the parties of record's choice or the Applicants' choice. It must be the right choice and stand as a wall of protection for the United States of America. "IN GOD WE TRUST"

In Jesus' mighty name, amen.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Ruth L. Tines

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EXHIBIT INDEX & FIELD DOCUMENTATION

EXHIBIT PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHIC & MAP EVIDENCE OF LOCAL RAILWAY CONGESTION

Photographs taken locally off 79th Street (near Landers Yard) and surrounding Chicago corridors illustrate severe traffic backlogs, dangerous crossing blockages, and immediate community gridlock on the Southwest Side caused by freight rail operations.

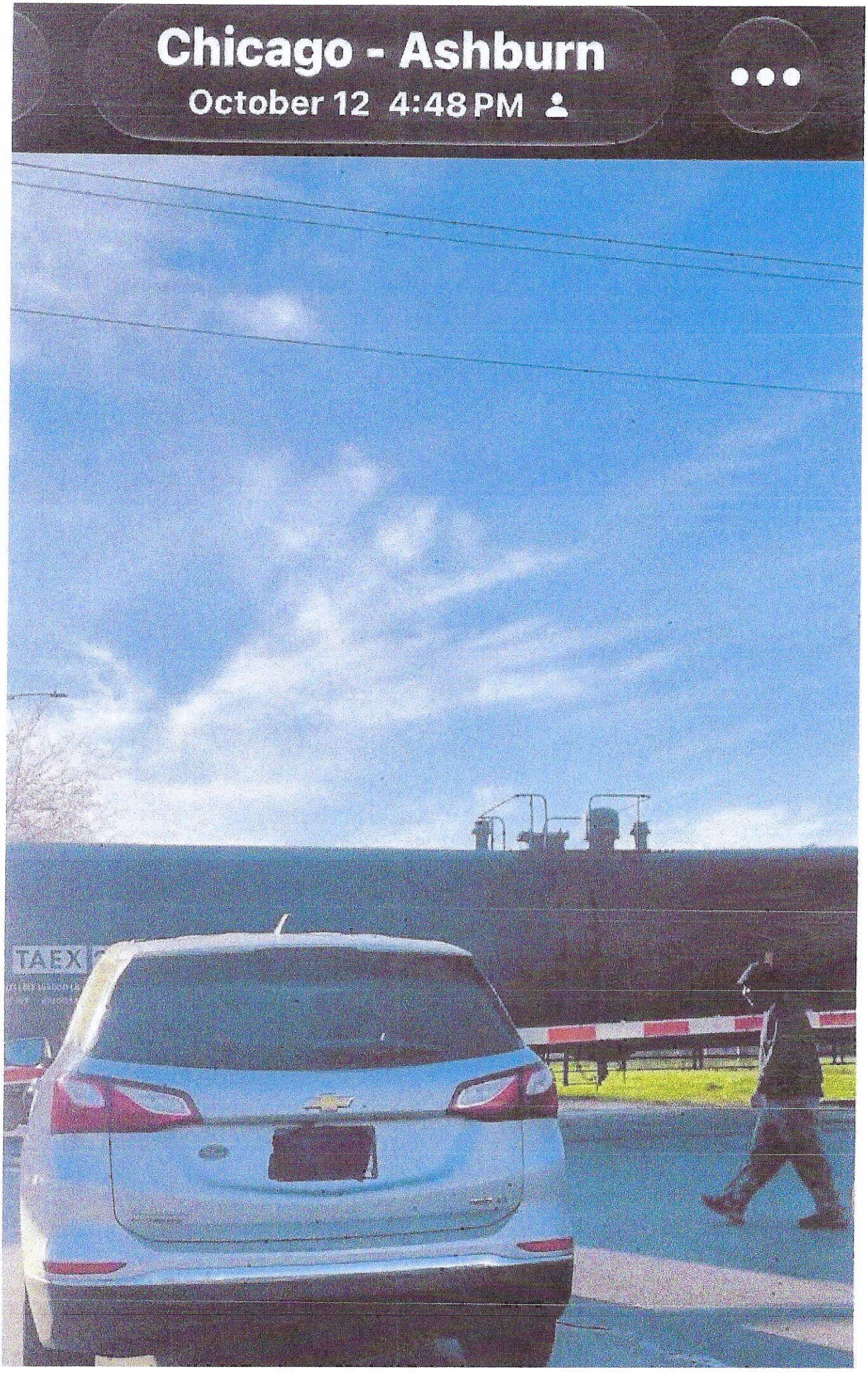
1. **Figure 1:** Authentic Field Documentation — September 10 at 2:29 PM (Landers Yard Corridor)
2. **Figure 2:** Authentic Field Documentation — September 10 at 3:30 PM (Chicago - Ashburn)
3. **Figure 3:** Authentic Field Documentation — October 12 at 4:48 PM (Urban Corridor Gridlock)
4. **Figure 4:** Authentic Field Documentation — Local Chokepoint Gridlock and Freight Obstruction
5. **Regional Impact Analysis:** Regional map detailing freight corridors, rail yards, and conflict zones across Chicago and southern suburbs. Red overlays highlight areas of primary public impact.

September 10 2:29 PM

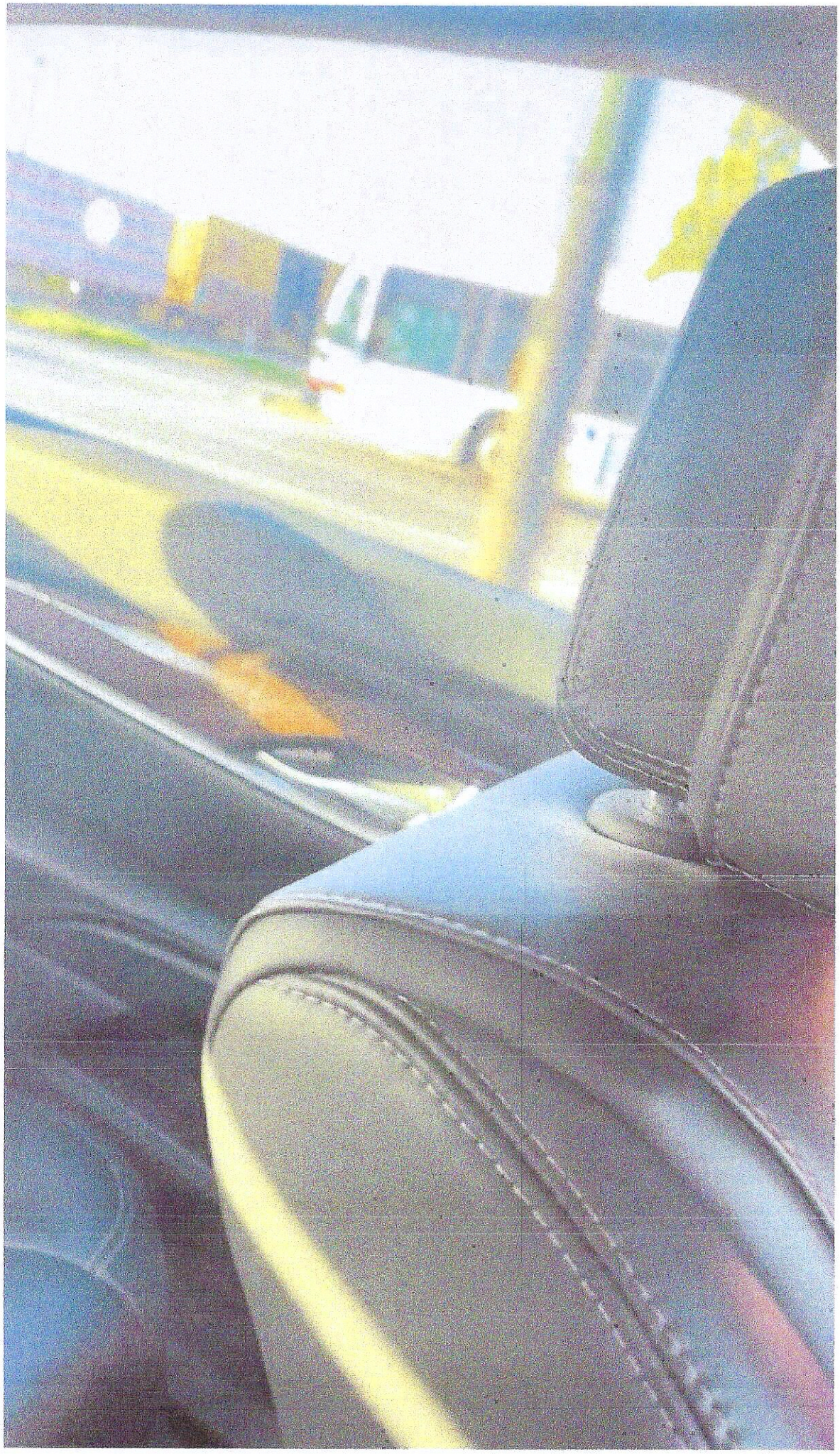


September 10 3:30 PM

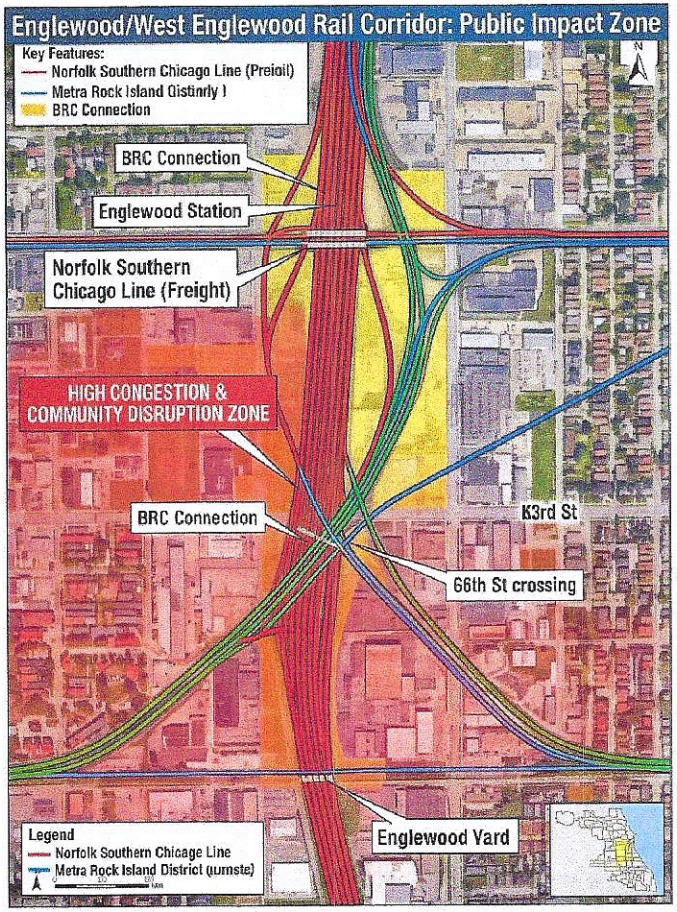


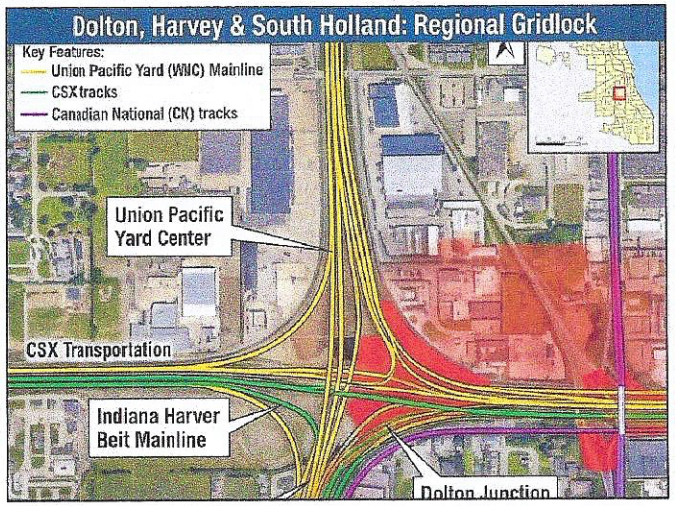

Chicago - Ashburn
October 12 4:48 PM

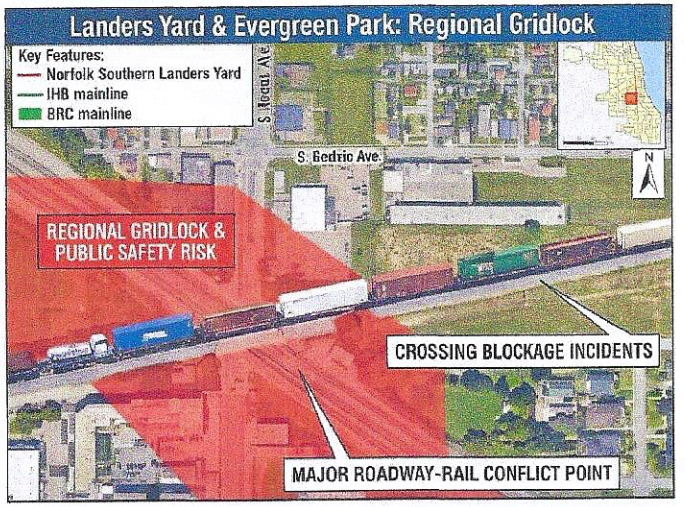




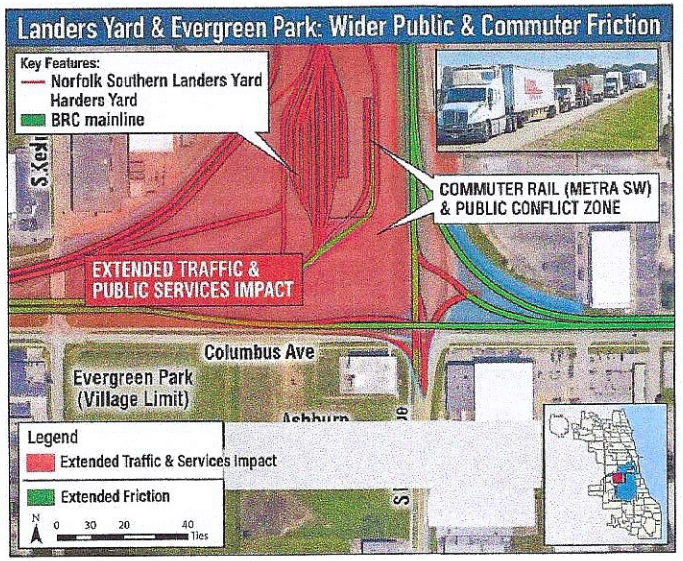
PUBLIC & REGIONAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED UNION PACIFIC ACQUISITION OF NORFOLK SOUTHERN: CHICAGO SOUTHLAND EXHIBIT











This exhibit demonstrates that the proposed merger will not just impact rail operations, but will cause widespread, systemic gridlock, community disruption, and public safety risks across the entire City of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, affecting public services, commuter traffic, and quality of life. The red overays highlight areas of primary public impact.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 17th day of November, 2026, a true and correct copy of the foregoing Final Letter, including exhibits and photographic evidence, was served via electronic mail and the Surface Transportation Board's filing system upon all parties of record in Docket No. FD 36873.

Respectfully submitted,

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