

Phyllis Johnson-Ball
 STB Finance Docket No. 35087
 Surface Transportation Board
 395 E. Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001

September 26, 2008

To the members of the Federal Surface Transportation Board and the SEA:

The draft EIS notes that the proposed action would substantially affect at least 15 highway-rail at-grade crossings, among them, Route 59-Hough Street in Barrington. The community accepts that conclusion, given the gridlocked traffic snarl already created by the Union Pacific/Metra line's at-grade crossing on Hough.

However, the Draft EIS contends that the Route 59-Hough Street crossing is the only one to consider, contending that it is the only roadway that has queue lengths that would block a major roadway. This is not accurate and must be corrected in the final draft. The at-grade crossing on Route 14-Northwest Highway, just east of Route 59-Hough will certainly experience vehicle back-ups with queue lengths blocking Route 59-Hough itself.

Route 14-Northwest Highway's traffic estimations show it carrying almost 10,000 more vehicles per day than Route 59-Hough. In fact, in Appendix E, the SEA determines that Northwest Highway will increase seven-fold. While we respect the SEA's effort to apply standards to its analysis, clearly it's discounting Route 14-Northwest Highway solely because its Level of (roadway) Service (LOS) is rated an "E," versus Route 59's worst-possible congestion rating of LOS-"F." This is flawed in the conclusion it forces the SEA to draw.

In reality on the ground, BOTH Route 59 and Route 14 require grade separations.

The facts:

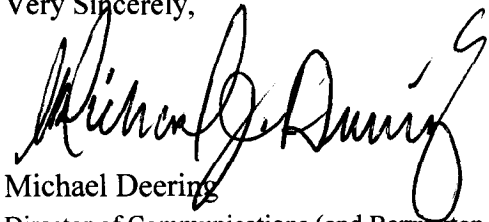
- Route 59 is a bottlenecked two-lane highway without a shoulder and homes and businesses only yards from the curb; Route 14 is four lanes, capable of permitting an ambulance to pass;
- Fire Department Station One is only a few hundred yards east beyond the Route 14-Northwest Highway crossing, an obvious access point for emergency medical services to move to the east or west sides of the community and be able to access Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital;
- 9,600 more cars are estimated to travel on Route 14 than Route 59;
- Grade separation on 59 would be significantly more costly due to properties affected, and, due to the fact that an EJ&E-only mitigation would only reduce CN's exacerbation of an existing congestion problem the village already contends with;
- Grade-separating Route 59 would not permit an ambulance to pass in its current two-lane configuration, and the mitigation would need to include the UP/Metra line just south of the EJ&E as well, a far greater undertaking than Route 14;
- Traffic backing up and queuing to wait for trains on Route 14 will block Route 59, another state highway;

- The draft fails to compare estimates out to 2015 for not only vehicles on the roads, but for population growth, which it illustrated as 2-3% annual growth. Access to emergency services is a recognized, serious issue for Lake County, with a population projected to surge more than 20 percent in the next 10 years. (*Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board: Round Lake AICC submission data*). Barrington straddles Lake and Cook Counties, and Good Shepherd lies within Lake County;
- Likewise, according to the 2005 US Census Bureau, McHenry County ranks fifth in the state for explosive population growth. It is reasonable to contend that the majority of eastbound route 14 traffic is attributed to McHenry County residents using the thoroughfare as daily commuters traveling to employment bases east. This surging population to the west too, will exacerbate the queue lengths in the near future on Route 14;
- The proposed action by CN will not exacerbate an existing problem on Route 14, but will create an entirely new one, unlike the congested gridlock the village already currently faces on Route 59. This will be an environmental impact created solely by CN's own doing;
- The Draft EIS acknowledges that the highest estimated daily traffic increase for any EJ&E crossing is Route 14-Northwest Highway;
- The SEA recognizes that mitigation that addresses vehicle delay could also be effective in reducing or mitigating emergency vehicle delay, which is entirely the case for arguing that both Route 59 and specifically Route 14, be grade-separated, with the latter being paid for by CN, **since it is entirely the applicant causing this impact.**
- **Lastly and importantly**, is the STB permitted to ONLY consider present ramifications of a proposed action? Because according to CN, its Phase II of the Port of Prince Rupert will be complete in 2010, not far away. Its completion means that CN's container capacity will quadruple from 500,000 to 2,000,000 containers. **Have you asked CN: What plans if any do they have to further increase the numbers and lengths of freight trains on the EJ&E line? THIS MUST BE ADDRESSED.**

In summary, residents require not only access to emergency vehicles – specifically, ambulances – but must be able to have those vehicles transport them to medical attention in the most expeditious manner, not the most convenient and cost-effective for a particular railroad.

I implore the Surface Transportation Board to put people before profits in this proposed action, and insist that CN provide substantive mitigation that meets this community's realistic and yes, reasonable expectations for its own safety or **DO NOT APPROVE THIS PROPOSED ACTION.**

Very Sincerely,



Michael Deering

Director of Communications (and Barrington, IL resident living close to the EJ&E)

Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital

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