



17157

Municipal Center

4900 Village Commons
Matteson, IL 60443
708-283-4900
Fax: 708-748-5196
www.villageofmatteson.org

Administration

Village Administrator
708-283-4911
Office of the Village Clerk
708-283-4950
Economic Development
708-283-4940

Community Development

Building Services
708-481-8313
Fax: 708-748-2326
Community Affairs
708-283-4777
Housing Information Center
708-503-3100
Planning
708-283-4940

Finance

708-283-4900
Water Billing Services
708-283-4790

Fire Department

3445 211th Street
708-748-5129
Fax: 708-283-6606
Fire Prevention Bureau
708-283-4939
Fax: 708-748-2326

Human Resources

708-283-4949

Police Department

20500 S. Cicero Ave.
Administrative Division
708-748-4085
Fax: 708-748-7364
Non-Emergency
708-748-1564

Public Works

21146 Tower Ave.
708-748-1411
Fax: 708-503-3120
Engineering
708-283-4948
Parks Maintenance
708-720-1876

Recreational Services

4450 W. Oakwood Lane
708-748-1080
Fax: 708-748-1423

September 30, 2008

Phillis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transpiration Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Ref. STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

Please accept this correspondence as the official public comment from the Village of Matteson on the above referenced petition. The proposed acquisition of the E.J. & E. Railroad by Canadian National Railroad poses numerous detriments to the region and the Village of Matteson. The Village's concerns can be segregated into two major categories of regional concerns and Matteson specific.

Regional Concerns:

There are a number of issues that will affect the region as a whole. The Village of Matteson is a long standing member of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and supports the issues outlined in their Issue Paper entitled "Proposed Canadian National Railway Acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway" on this matter. Additionally, the Village has concerns about regional matters including emergency services, traffic implications, accident rates along the E.J. & E. Railroad and the transportation of hazardous materials.

Emergency Service:

There are eleven (11) Fire and Emergency Service Providers that would potentially experience substantial effects as a result of the proposed acquisition.

Traffic:

There are fifteen (15) at-grade crossings that have been identified in the EIS that will be "significantly affected" by this proposed acquisition, indicating that possible mitigation measures should be considered. Additional funding, by Canadian National, should be made available to address any and all issues that can and will arise at these fifteen (15) at-grade crossings. One of these fifteen (15) crossings is located at Cicero Avenue, between Sauk Trail and Lincoln Highway. Cicero Avenue is a regional arterial that would experience delays and degradation of the service level due to the increase in train traffic. To mitigate this issue, the Village of Matteson would require the construction of an at-grade

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separation, funded by Canadian National Railroad, at the "Proposed Matteson Connection" east of Cicero Avenue in Historic Matteson. In reviewing the Environmental Impact Study for this project there is a mantra that is repeated throughout the document regarding the Proposed Matteson Connection, that the "proposed connection would result in reduced train speeds through this area and thus increase delays at the existing Main Street, Cicero Avenue, and Western Avenue crossings." It is of paramount concern to the Village that this issue be addressed.

Accident Rates:

While this proposed acquisition will reduce the accident rate at crossings in those communities further in towards the City of Chicago, it will be increasing the accident rate to those communities that will be experiencing an increase in the number of trains through their communities. The EIS stated that there would be a projected 28% increase in the number of accidents along the EJ & E Railroad. Steps should be taken to improve the crossings that are most likely to have accidents take place. A 28% increase in the number of accidents along the EJ&E Railroad is unacceptable to the Village.

Transportation of Hazardous Materials:

While railroads are a safe way to transport hazardous materials the increase of and amount of materials that can be transported by the railroad is a concern of the Village.

Matteson Specific:

Matteson has several concerns specific to the Village. These concerns center on the "Proposed Matteson Connection" to the existing Canadian National line, the Matteson Metra Station, flooding at the grade separation at Governor's Highway and the E. J. & E. railroad and general maintenance of the railroad right-of-way.

Proposed Matteson Connection:

The "Proposed Matteson Connection" from the existing Canadian National Line to the E. J. & E. line in historic downtown Matteson. This connection may affect the aforementioned traffic issue on Cicero Avenue and housing and redevelopment potential surrounding the connection.

The area where the connection is proposed was identified as a potential site for Transit Oriented Development, with its location close to the historic village center and the existing Matteson Metra Station. An existing industrial building is being examined as a possible location for the Village's Public Works Garage at the north end of the proposed site where this connection is to be constructed.

There is also the affect that the proposed Matteson connection will have on the existing houses that will have the connection in the backyards of their property that does not currently exist there. Homes are often the biggest investment that people have and their primary source of wealth. Anything that might affect the value of these investments is of serious concern to the people who own these homes. The EIS mentions that there is no new construction of rail lines proposed for this project and that any depreciation of housing stock adjoining the rail lines has

already been factored into the price of the housing. However, the EIS does not factor in several houses that will have the proposed Matteson connection constructed within seventy-five (75) feet of their second floor living space. In the study by Simons and El Jaouhari that was quoted by the EIS, the increases in rail traffic past existing houses dropped their property value by 0.24% per train. Given that this acquisition would produce twenty-three (23) additional trains a day, this would lead to a total of 5.52% reduction of property values of the existing houses along the E. J. & E. route. This would probably be greater for the houses that are abutting the new proposed Matteson connection, as tracks do not already exist next to these houses and due to the elevation of the track at this location the tracks will be at the second floor level of these houses.

The study stated that the greatest property value loss was on houses under 1,250 square feet in size. Though there is a wide variety in the age of the housing that abuts the E. J. & E. Line most are modest in size and would be amongst those housing units that would be the greatest affected.

The EIS studied four different options for connecting the existing Canadian National Line to the E. J. & E. Line, a No Build Option, a Proposed Matteson Connection, a Matteson Alternative NE & SW Quadrants, and a Matteson Alternative - Southwest Quadrant.

If the purchase of the E. J. & E. were to go through, the Village would prefer the "No Build Option" or the "Matteson Alternative Southwest Quadrant" over the other two. These alternatives would still allow Canadian National to make the turning movements they require and would not seriously affect the existing neighborhoods within the Village. The Matteson Alternative - NE & SW Quadrants would be preferred due to the construction of the wye track being located as far from the adjoining households as possible and allowing the trains to complete this movement at a speed of 25 miles per hour. The least favorable option would be the petitioners Proposed Matteson Connection due to the location of the new tracks within seventy-five feet of existing residential homes and decreasing the speed at which trains could negotiate this connection to 15 miles per hour, possibly affecting traffic either on Western Avenue or on Cicero Avenue. The noise generated by the proposed connection will exceed 65 dBA which is entering the "Intrusive Range" due primarily to the squeal of wheels on curved track. This noise would be generated at the second floor level of the adjoining residential properties to the east. The construction of the proposed connection will also remove \$50,000 from the tax roles of local governments.

As noted in the EIS, the proposed Matteson connection is not consistent with either the Village of Matteson's or the Village of Park Forest's Land-Use or Zoning Plans.

The EIS fails to mention that there are three houses that will be surrounded within the circumference of the Proposed Matteson Connection. Canadian National should make a good faith offer to either buy out these property owners or offer to relocate them within the Village.

Any improvements that the Canadian National Railroad would undertake in respect to any of the Proposed or Alternative connections should include means to mediate the impacts to the

adjoining properties, including but not limited to sound walls, lubricated tracks and landscaped berms.

Matteson Metra Station:

The proposed construction of the proposed Matteson connection or the Matteson Alternative NE & SW Quadrants would have impacts on the Village's Kiss-and-Ride for the Matteson Metra Station and the adjoining Metra parking lot that is owned by Park Forest. The proposed alignments for these connections appear to conflict with access to the eastside of Matteson Metra Station. The Village needs to have the full impact of the proposed connections and the remediation of the impacts prior to this project going forward.

Flooding at Governor's Highway:

There is continuous flooding that takes place at the grade separated crossing where the EJ & E railroad and Governor's Highway cross. The flooding closes a major north-south thoroughfare through the Village for emergency responders. This is the only grade separated crossing in the Village for emergency responders to get around a possible train for several miles.

Technical Comment on the Environmental Impact Study

There is a technical issue that the Village has with the EIS report which pertains to the level of service (LOS) on Cicero Avenue. The LOS on Cicero Avenue that was indicated in the EIS stated that Cicero Avenue was currently operating at "E" or "F" Level of Service. Village records indicate that the LOS is "C".

Conclusion:

The Village of Matteson cannot support the proposed purchase of the E. J. & E. Railroad by the Canadian National Railroad in its current form until the Village is satisfied that the increased rail traffic will not hamper the region surrounding the E. J. & E. Railroad or the Village and its residents. The Village looks forward to discussing these issues with Canadian National Railway in the future.

Sincerely,



André B. Ashmore
President
Village of Matteson