



HOFFMAN ESTATES

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

William D. McLeod
MAYOR

January 30, 2008

01880, 013008, McLeod, Lock 60169, X.N

Ms. Phyllis Johnson-Ball
Environmental Filing
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

**Re: STB Finance Docket No. 35087
Metra STAR Line Project**

Surface Transportation Board
CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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Date Recd: _____

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Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

HDR

In my letter of January 18, 2008 regarding the proposed purchase of the EJ&E Railroad by the Canadian National, I mentioned the importance of the STAR Line commuter rail project along with other community concerns. I would like to expand on what I see as the critical role the STAR Line will play in reducing traffic congestion and facilitating appropriate types of development growth in our portion of the Chicago metropolitan area. The need to achieve an agreement with CN on accommodating the STAR Line must be stressed.

As Chair of the Metra Star Line Task Force, I would like to reiterate our strong need to preserve the capability to implement this project. It is currently in the Alternatives Analysis phase which should be completed later this year. I believe other communities will be providing similar letters of support for the STAR Line. As employment and residential centers are widely distributed, there is a growing need to offer efficient travel options to serve these trips. Suburb to suburb travel demand is on the increase, likely beyond what can typically be accommodated with traditional improvements to highway capacity. Employers are facing more difficulty attracting and maintaining qualified workers due to ever worsening traffic congestion. The STAR Line Task Force views this commuter rail service as a major component in the effort to maintain and improve the health and economic vitality of the region.

Dating back to the early 1990's, Hoffman Estates has been a leading proponent of introducing commuter rail service in the EJ&E corridor. Metra, with the cooperation of many communities along the EJ&E, evaluated the potential of the Outer Circumferential Service and found no significant physical impediments to its implementation. Later, Hoffman Estates joined together with communities along the Jane Adams Tollway (I-90) to support Metra's proposal for a new rail service to connect O'Hare International Airport on the east to Hoffman Estates on the west, with stations in Schaumburg, Arlington Heights, Elk Grove Village, Des Plaines, and Rolling Meadows. The line would then continue south on the EJ&E corridor to Joliet passing through

Bartlett, Naperville, West Chicago, and numerous other communities. All this activity, of course, occurred well before the CN's plan to purchase the EJ&E came forward. As the EJ&E segment of the STAR Line is vital to its overall success in connecting suburbs, I hope the critical need to elevate the importance of the STAR Line in the STB review can be accomplished.

Hoffman Estates completed an update of our Comprehensive Plan in 2007 before the CN announcement of its intention to acquire the EJ&E.. A significant focus of this update was on the STAR Line and the opportunities it creates for transit oriented development in station areas. Other communities have taken similar steps related to zoning changes, assembling and purchasing land in station areas, and creating station area plans for their community. Considerable time, funds, and effort have gone into planning accommodations for the STAR Line. For the STAR Line to remain viable, we must maintain flexibility for the joint use of the EJ&E corridor. My request is that the STB stress the importance of this cooperative effort with CN, should the transaction be approved, to ensure that a much needed and long sought commuter rail solution can be implemented within the EJ&E right of way.

Thank you again for your thoughtful consideration of impacts on the STAR Line due to the proposed CN acquisition. We look forward to a continuing role in the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement process and ultimately implementation of the STAR Line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William D. McLeod". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" being more prominent.

William D. McLeod
Village President
Chair, STAR Line Task Force

WDM/ds