

HOFFMAN ESTATES

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

William D. McLeod
MAYOR

January 18, 2008

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

STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

The Village of Hoffman Estates has identified the following concerns, and requests the Surface Transportation Board (STB) include these items in the Environmental Impact Statement Scope for the Canadian National (CN) acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern (EJ&E) railroad. The EJ&E railroad tracks run through the western portion of the Village, for approximately 2.75 miles. They are adjacent to three residential neighborhoods in the Village, the Prairie Stone Business Park, a regional park, and also incorporated land with future plans for development. The tracks also run adjacent to two Cook County Forest Preserves with recreational paths and wildlife that many residents enjoy. There is one at grade crossing in the Village on Shoe Factory Road, with two others just north of the corporate limits. The Village has a long history of supporting the 55 mile Suburban Transit Access Route (STAR Line), proposed by Metra as a regional commuter rail improvement. On behalf of the Village and as chair of the STAR Line Steering Committee, we want to ensure the acquisition by CN does not preclude this or other future transit improvements for the region.

Many of our residents have voiced concerns over the CN's projected increase in freight traffic. They and other groups either have submitted or will submit comments detailing their issues. The Village Board of Trustees would like to submit the following comments regarding the impacts of the acquisition to be studied during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). I trust that a disposition of responses to comments from the Village and others will be provided by the STB. We also look forward to reviewing the Draft EIS and making comments at that time as well as throughout the balance of the EIS. We certainly welcome the open and public review that STB has chosen for the proposed acquisition. Village staff and residents attended the open house meetings on the scoping process. If Village staff can be of assistance by providing land use, traffic count, density, or other information in your review process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The following comments are grouped according to areas of similar concerns due to the impacts from the increase in freight traffic from the acquisition.

General Comments

1. The CN's long term plans for rail operations beyond the three to five year phase-in period for the EJ&E need to be more completely defined and assessed in the EIS. The Village recommends a longer time horizon for the environmental analysis, such as 20 years which is the typical NEPA standard. If this horizon year is not possible, the analysis should be tied to threshold levels of rail traffic that will create impacts that need to be mitigated.
2. The impacts due to both physical changes, such as double tracking and new rail connections at intersections with other lines, and operational changes associated with the increase in rail traffic need to be fully evaluated and effectively mitigated.
3. The CN states they will schedule operations with consideration given to existing commuter rail traffic. The effect would be to concentrate more freight traffic during the times when commuter rail operations are not in conflict on routes crossed by the EJ&E. In turn, this could result in more freight traffic at night when noise, vibration, and quality of life issues are more sensitive.
4. Does CN plan to transport hazardous materials along the EJ&E tracks and what plans need to be implemented to ensure hazardous spills do not impact adjacent properties? A comment regarding CN's history of hazardous materials incidents was voiced.
5. The EIS should identify funding opportunities to implement the recommended mitigations.
6. Does the CN plan to run additional trains on the existing inner tracks where they would have "freed -up" capacity by re-routing the trains to the EJ&E.
7. Is there another corridor that could be used to provide the benefits of avoiding downtown Chicago, but does not create the impacts of running through so many communities?

Impacts to Adjacent Properties

There are a variety of land uses that abut or are near the EJ&E tracks through the Village of Hoffman Estates. Starting from the north and working south, there is a future mixed use development site including potential residential, the Prairie Stone Business Park, the Bridlewood residential subdivision (located in unincorporated Cook County), the Estates of Deer Crossing residential neighborhood, the Cannon Crossing regional park, and the Hunters Ridge and Winding Trails residential neighborhoods. The Poplar Creek and Spring Creek Forest Preserves also abut the EJ&E tracks. The following is a list of

concerns associated with the impacts to adjacent properties due to the increase in freight traffic.

1. Noise levels will increase for sensitive land use receptors such as existing residential development adjacent to the EJ&E within Hoffman Estates. The impacts from both wayside and operational noise should be analyzed.
2. More night time freight traffic when ambient noise levels are much lower.
3. Vibration levels will increase for sensitive land use receptors such as residential adjacent to the EJ&E within Hoffman Estates.
4. Air quality will be negatively impacted due to increased idling by trains or motor vehicle traffic stopped at the Shoe Factory Road crossing with the EJ&E.
5. Impacts to existing wildlife in the Forest Preserves, especially the natural wildlife crossing the EJ&E between Golf and Shoe Factory Roads.

Impacts to Area Roadway Crossings

There are five roadway crossings of the EJ&E tracks in the Village of Hoffman Estates, one of which is an at-grade crossing, on Shoe Factory Road. There are also two other at-grade crossings in the vicinity of Hoffman Estates, to the north (Old Sutton and Penny Roads). Shoe Factory Road is a critical east-west arterial for the Village, connecting the western area with the central core of the Village. There are also bicycle / pedestrian accommodations that run along the north side of Shoe Factory Road, connecting with the forest preserve path system to the east of the EJ&E tracks. The following is a list of concerns associated with the impacts to the transportation network due to the increase in freight traffic.

1. More freight train traffic will result in increased roadway traffic congestion for the at-grade crossing of the EJ&E at Shoe Factory Road.
2. Increased train traffic will require additional safety measures to be installed for the at-grade crossing of the EJ&E at Shoe Factory Road.
3. Emergency vehicle response times will be adversely impacted due to the additional delays for the at-grade crossing of the EJ&E at Shoe Factory Road.
4. The increase in train traffic will affect the Quiet Zone establishment currently underway on this section of the EJ&E. Additional costs will be incurred by local agencies for supplemental measures needed to create and maintain a Quiet Zone.

5. Bicycle and pedestrian movement on the existing Forest Preserve and multi-use path crossing the EJ&E tracks will be negatively affected due to an increase in train traffic and related crossing delays.
6. The ability to potentially use a portion the EJ&E right of way under I-90 for a future multi-use path connecting areas of the Village separated by the Jane Adams Tollway.
7. Emissions will increase in the area due to more idling and train traffic.
8. Fuel consumption will increase due to more frequent stoppages on Shoe Factory Road at the EJ&E crossing and due to traffic diverting to other routes to avoid delays, increasing vehicle miles of travel in the area.
9. The increase in train traffic will affect school bus transportation.
10. The impact from trains switching tracks blocking traffic.
11. While comments are focused on the Shoe Factory Road crossing, the cumulative congestion effects in the region should be assessed.

Impacts on Proposed Regional Transit Improvements

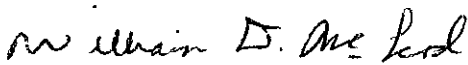
There are plans for the STAR Line to utilize the EJ&E corridor, providing the first national suburban to suburban commuter rail line. The first phase of the project, currently in the FTA Alternatives Analysis phase is to use the EJ&E corridor from I-90 south to Joliet, connecting with a section that will use the I-90 right of way connecting to O'Hare Airport to the east. There are also future concepts to provide a complete circumferential transit service around the Chicago metropolitan area, using the entire EJ&E tracks from Waukegan to Indiana. The Village of Hoffman Estates has been and continues to be an adamant proponent of this rail service. It is critical to provide alternate public transportation choices to maintain mobility into the future. The following comments are associated with impacts to transit service caused by the increase in freight traffic.

1. The ability to share track or build additional track for commuter transit within the EJ&E right of way must be preserved.
2. The operation of additional freight traffic on the EJ&E corridor will affect the ability of Metra to implement commuter rail operations when the STAR Line is established.
3. Future congestion at the regional level will increase if the STAR Line is not implemented.

4. A concern on the width of the EJ&E right of way to accommodate the necessary number of tracks for commuter and freight traffic.

The Village of Hoffman Estates thanks the Surface Transportation Board for the opportunity to provide comments on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement. We look forward to receipt of the Draft EIS and the opportunity to participate throughout the STB process. We are available to assist by providing any and all information about the Village to STB.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William D. McLeod".

William D. McLeod
Mayor

WDM/mh/vdr