



August 25, 2008

 1501 Chicago Road, Chicago Heights, IL 60411
 (708) 709-2694 Fax: (708) 709-2693

Dear Surface Transportation Board,

I am the pastor of both St. Agnes Catholic Church and School in Chicago Hts, and St. Paul's Catholic Church in Chicago Hts. St. Agnes is north of the railroad tracks that the Canadian National Railway is proposing to buy. St. Paul is south of the tracks. St. Agnes has about 1200 registered families and St. Paul has about 1400 families. I will list my concerns after living in the community for the past 12 years.

Concerns or comments:

1. All major health care facilities in this area are located north of the EJ & E railroad tracks. These include St. James, Chicago Hts., St. James, Olympia Fields, Ingals, Harvey, Advocate South Suburban, Hazel Crest. For all the people who live south of the tracks this becomes a health and safety concern. Their closest facility would either send them to Indiana or Kankakee if they are unable to get across the tracks due to a train. All the railroad crossings in Chicago Heights are at grade level. The only underpass is an old one lane road/walkway into the steel mill east of East End Ave at Butler St.
2. Another concern for us and any school that operates near the tracks is that some of the Students and teachers live on the other side of the tracks. This purchase will affect the tardiness of teachers and students to their schools. This also becomes a safety issue if there are 25 students in a classroom waiting for a teacher who is waiting for a train.
3. The response time for fire and police is also affected. This concerns where the major equipment is staged in relation to the tracks. I.e. north or south.
4. Chicago Road, Route 1, is presently a major north/south route connecting the south suburbs with the inner suburbs and Chicago. Whenever one of the present 10 trains goes through town now, there is usually a ½ mile backup when the gates go back up. Add to that mix the prefab houses that use Chicago Road as their delivery routes and the back ups and delays erase any energy savings that may come from the trains circling the Metropolitan Area of Chicago.
5. This will have a negative effect on the local economy. Last night after waiting for 5 minutes for a parked train on Chicago Road, I turned around and went to a different eatery in a different community so I could have dinner. Thus Chicago Hts lost out on tax revenue and the restaurant its business.

In conclusion I would ask that if you give the go ahead for this purchase that you also consider its effects on all of us, and mandate that the Canadian National Railway would build viaducts or bridges along the proposed route.

Sincerely,

Fr. John Siemianowski, St. Agnes and St. Paul Catholic Churches, Chicago Hts

Growing Minds, Guiding Souls