

Phillis Johnson-Ball,

While freight traffic in this day and age is inevitably on the rise, the town of Barrington is ill prepared to accept the influx of freight that the Canadian National rail line suggests at this time. The need to accept greater freight passage is unavoidable, but we, as a community, need time and assistance to prepare ourselves before accepting this proposal.

The economy of this town is in a delicate state. As it is, stores, restaurants, and businesses that settle here cannot thrive, and establishments that have long been cornerstones of downtown Barrington are disappearing at an alarming rate. In fact, the large majority of the Barrington population with access to transportation leaves the town to do their work, shopping, and dining. Thus, Barrington dollars are rarely spent in Barrington itself. While there are many potential reasons for this export of patronage, one large contribution is the state of Barrington traffic. With the intersection of Route 59, Route 14, and Main Street, as well as two train lines in the heart of the town, getting anywhere quickly around Barrington is out of the question between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Due to this stop-and-go monotony, most of those who live here have simply chosen to bypass the town altogether on their way to and from work or recreational activities.

A four-fold increase in freight traffic would exacerbate this situation exponentially. Not only would drivers be delayed for an inordinately long amount of time each morning and evening, but commuter trains would need to stop constantly in town waiting for the freight to pass. Even those few who brave the traffic in order to get to work or to visit the local shops would be hard pressed to wait so long between stop lights and eventually bring their business outside of Barrington for simplicity's sake. Ultimately, the congestion and frustrations that would come with increased freight traffic may lead many of the people who have shaped this community to leave it in favor of finding a home with the character that would no longer be possible in Barrington.

Furthermore, the level of accidents in town caused by traffic situations is already high. There are several injuries every year from people racing to beat a light, get across the tracks, or speeding down quiet side streets to avoid heavy traffic. This past year alone two young men were killed on each of the main rail lines passing through town. An increase in traffic and wait times will only raise tempers and brazenness to an unsafe level unless we take measures to make these train crossings safer.

The lack of train over- or underpasses has always been a shortcoming of the roadway system in the Barrington area, especially in light of the number of high-volume roads and rail lines passing through such a small area in the center of town. Other nearby towns can attest to the validity of train overpasses for easing traffic flow. Using this time not to debate the inevitability of increasing freight, but instead ~~in planning~~^{to} the construction of the necessary bridges and overpasses would serve this community well.

In short, we are not ready to accept the offer of the Canadian National railroad without also accepting the consequences that come with our unprepared infrastructure for increased freight: more hazardous traffic, a higher instance of accident or injury resulting from that traffic, and the further demise of the Barrington economy. Instead of resisting change we must work cooperatively to find a balance between the face of the future and the classic qualities that have made Barrington the refuge that it has been for so many families for so long. Until we are better prepared to adapt to the higher freight traffic, the answer to the Canadian National railroad acquisition must be no.

Kelly Spicer