

1 SCOPING MEETING FOR THE PROPOSED CANADIAN
2 NATIONAL RAILWAY COMPANY ACQUISITION OF THE
3 ELGIN, JOLIET AND EASTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
4
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9 STATEMENT OF:
10 JIM BEIFUSS
11

12 AUGUST 28, 2008
13

14 BARTLETT HIGH SCHOOL
15 701 SCHICK ROAD
16 BARTLETT, ILLINOIS
17
18
19

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1 MR. BEIFUSS: I am Jim Beifuss,
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2 alderman for the City of West Chicago. I'm
3 a 15-year resident for the City of West
4 Chicago and have served on the city council
5 for about 7 years.

6 I have been a member of our
7 council's infrastructure and development
8 committees and have served as chairman of
9 the infrastructure committee. As such, I
10 have developed a substantial understanding
11 of our transportation needs and challenges
12 and the importance of mitigating adverse
13 impacts in connection with transportation
14 projects.

15 My interest here is in the
16 health, welfare, and safety of the
17 residents of West Chicago. West Chicago
18 was incorporated more than 150 years ago
19 and has a long history with the railroads.
20 The EJ&E railroad and the Union Pacific
21 lines intersect in the geographic center of
22 our town, in our historic downtown in the
23 middle of Washington Street, the primary
24 collector street. Those two rail lines

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1 box off the residents of the southeast
2 corner of town from the main fire station
3 located on Fremont Street directly north of
4 our downtown.

5 The consequences of track
6 blockage to fire and ambulance response are
7 well known to our first responders and
8 residents. It is notable that the study
9 did not consider the cumulative effect of
10 two intersecting lines in the calculation
11 of total delay hours and the determination
12 of "substantial affected crossings."

13 We have, during two different
14 administrations, commissioned engineering
15 studies to come up with plans to bridge or
16 go under the tracks to address public
17 safety concerns associated with fire,
18 police, and ambulance response.

19 The first study came up with
20 various grade separation options on
21 Washington Street that entailed wrecking a
22 substantial portion of downtown and cost
23 about \$20 million. This was done years
24 ago.

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1 The second, more-recent study
2 looked at a bypass option a few blocks
3 north of Washington Street. The
4 engineering consultants' design, taking
5 into account all of the main track, spur,
6 and terrain features, entailed a monstrous
7 bypass four lanes wide, about a mile long,

8 most of it elevated about 30 feet high.

9 The railroad contribution to
10 building such overpasses in either
11 scenario, just 5 percent, the rest of the
12 cost to be borne by the taxpayers.

13 Given the crippling blockage
14 caused by the combined traffic of the rail
15 lines, imagine our shock when we read that
16 the Washington Street crossing did not make
17 the list of intersections meriting
18 mitigation.

19 On the subject of environmental
20 justice, the draft report indicates that
21 the most densely populated areas along the
22 line are West Chicago and Park Forest. The
23 population of West Chicago is 26,000
24 persons, and approximately 48 percent of

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1 those persons are Hispanic. In West
2 Chicago the EJ&E right-of-way is directly
3 adjacent to dense residential
4 neighborhoods, including many thousands of
5 school children and senior citizens. Those
6 residents will be disproportionately
7 adversely impacted by the 12-fold increase
8 in train traffic along the track.

9 First, combined with the UP
10 traffic, the increase will effectively wall

11 off a quarter of our town from emergency
12 response and services. This will
13 materially adversely impact their health
14 and welfare, and the impact on community
15 cohesion will not be minor, as concluded on
16 page 16 of the report.

17 Second, the impact on quality of
18 life will be impaired. I know first hand
19 that even now the noise of squealing steel
20 wheels and the cacophonous banging of the
21 cars when the EJ&E trains stop and back up
22 is deafening. What can we expect when the
23 tonnage is increased 12 times and the
24 trains are two miles long?

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1 Third, the substantially
2 increased quantity of hazardous materials
3 transported near the homes will subject
4 them to a greater likelihood of
5 catastrophic releases. See page 12 of the
6 executive summary.

7 The report downplays the threat
8 by reducing the analysis to a simple
9 consideration of the likely releases per
10 year instead of the number of persons
11 affected in built-up areas should the
12 release occur there.

13 One release in West Chicago is
Page 5

14 one too many, especially given the number
15 of souls directly adjacent to the tracks
16 when the emergency response will be
17 critically impaired by the selfsame rail
18 lines.

19 And fourth, it is notable that
20 the number of potential accidents involving
21 pedestrians or bicycles could not be
22 quantified because "no agency keeps data on
23 such incidents." See page 13 of the
24 executive summary.

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1 For an old, established
2 community like West Chicago, sidewalks
3 which children use to walk to school and
4 where residents traditionally walk to
5 shopping, churches, and parks, that absence
6 of data leaves a complete hole in the
7 analysis. The report states we should
8 expect a 28 percent increase in accidents
9 of all kinds along the EJ&E route, but
10 under its weird accounting that should be
11 discounted by any expected reduction and
12 expected accidents along CN track inside
13 the EJ&E arc. See page 12.

14 The analysis is based upon the
15 change in the number of train rail miles
16 and does not take into account the relative

17 lack of underpasses and overpasses along
18 the EJ&E in built-up areas such as West
19 Chicago, nor does it factor in the
20 temporary nature of traffic reduction along
21 the existing CN tracks if the merger is
22 allowed, especially given that the EJ&E arc
23 will be at or near capacity within three to
24 five years.

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1 (End of statement.)
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