

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1302

SUBCOMMITTEES:
LABOR-HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES-EDUCATION
FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING
AND RELATED PROGRAMS

Comments of Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr.
Presented At U.S. Surface Transportation Board Public Hearing
on Draft EIS for Proposed Acquisition of
EJ&E Railroad by Canadian National Railway
Monday, August 25, 2008 – Matteson, Illinois

I am Rick Bryant, the District Administrator for Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr.

The issue that brings us here today is a complicated and perplexing one for Congressman Jackson. That's because about one third of his district, the northern third, strongly favors this transaction because it will significantly reduce train traffic for them.

Another third of the district, the southern third, strongly opposes this transaction because it will significantly increase train traffic in their communities.

The middle-third communities will see little impact from the proposed transaction and, therefore, remain largely ambivalent on the issue.

And then finally, there's Homewood, the U.S. corporate headquarters for Canadian National Railway. Homewood favors the sale because local officials fear that, without this transaction, CN will move a significant number of its current and future freight operations – and local jobs – from the Chicago area to Memphis, Tennessee.

So, where does the Congressman stand?

He supports the sale – but his support is conditional.

He has asked the STB, twice in writing, to ensure that the terms of the sale include specific mitigation requirements in the communities between Matteson and the Indiana State Line. That mitigation includes underpasses or overpasses at four locations – Cicero Avenue in Matteson, Western Avenue in Park Forest, Chicago Road in Chicago Heights, and Lincoln Highway in Lynwood.

These viaducts will guarantee uninterrupted north-south automobile traffic flow on major thoroughfares in these communities. Also, these viaducts will prevent potential problems for local emergency vehicles who need around-the-clock access between local communities and the St. James Hospital campuses in Chicago Heights and Olympia Fields.

There is one other condition that the Congressman is demanding. Not only must the STB require these underpasses, but the STB must be responsible for identifying funding for them as well – funding that could come from some combination of sources including CN, the federal government and/or the state government.

As the Congressman stated in recent letters to the STB: The local communities simply cannot afford the underpasses – nor should they be required to.

The Congressman noted in his letters that of the 11 Chicagoland communities identified by the STB as needing mitigation, Chicago Heights has the lowest annual household income; Park Forest the third lowest; and Lynwood and Matteson were well below the metro average in income.”

In closing, the Congressman wrote that he believes the acquisition of EJ&E Railroad by Canadian Railway will greatly improve overall rail service and efficiencies throughout the Chicago area, as well as reduce overall rail congestion.

However, he emphasized, those overall regional benefits should not outweigh the specific local negative impacts that the rerouting of trains will surely create in certain communities.

“In the end,” Jackson told the STB,” I am counting on the Board to work with me and all interested parties to appropriately find funding for these highlighted mitigation projects.”

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