

Frankfort News Presse

A RUSSELL PUBLICATION CARRYING THE NEWS OF THE FRANKFORT COMMUNITY

FREE

Thursday, September 18, 2008

Frankfort, Illinois

Phone (708) 258-3473

Volume 7, Number 21

FREE

Concern over hazardous materials cargo from proposed railroad sale

Will County Board Chairman Jim Moustis (R-Frankfort) continues to have grave concerns about the proposed sale of the Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern Railway Company (EJ&E) to the Canadian National Railroad (CN).

In remarks prepared for delivery at a public hearing of the Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis last week, Moustis said, "The draft environmental impact statement is an incomplete document."

Citing high increases in the amount of hazmat cargo traveling through the county if the sale is approved, Moustis urged regulators to weigh the horrible impact of just one accident or terrorist attack.

"Citizens have the right to know the actual risk from hazardous materials that Canadian National may transport on the EJ&E if the purchase is approved," said Moustis. "The impacts caused by the release of toxic gas from even one rail car in an urban area would be an unprecedented disaster for any community, whether the release is accidental or intentional."

The STB's own map shows it would bring an estimated ten-fold increase in hazmat cargo on the northern half of the EJ&E line, including many communities in Will, DuPage, Cook and Lake Counties, and a seven-fold increase on the southern half of the EJ&E line.

The draft environmental impact statement asserts, without supporting evidence, that the existing regulatory system should be adequate for protection from hazardous materials accident risks but neglects any serious assessment of regional emergency response capabilities.

"The acquisition of the EJ&E by CN should not be approved until both a comprehensive assessment of all significant impacts and risks is completed and, most importantly, they are all properly addressed," said Moustis. "The CN has the ability to solve the problems they propose to create and the STB should absolutely require this of them."

Moustis went on to point out that there are existing, alternative rail routes located well around and outside the metropolitan Chicago area that CN could purchase and use.

The major railroads are already using many alternatives, and under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the STB should have considered these instead of limiting the choices of routing to the downtown Chicago lines and the EJ&E suburban loop.