

STB Meeting - August 27, 2008: Proposed CN Acquisition of the EJ&E

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Good Evening. My name is Peg Blanchard, Director of Economic and Community Development for the Village of Barrington. I am here to voice concerns with the DEIS Preliminary Impact Analysis, and comment on the economic and quality of life issues that would arise with the CN acquisition of the EJ&E.

Barrington's center of commerce is located in the heart of the community, surrounded by the EJ&E railroad, the Union Pacific Railroad and three major road networks. This unique set of circumstances creates both opportunities and challenges for local economic growth. Specifically, the major roadways (US Highway 14, Route 59 and Lake Cook Road) and the commuter rail system provides opportunities for increased exposure of our businesses and transportation alternatives for both customers and employees; but the rail and its competing use with the road system however, creates challenges in terms of traffic congestion within the community. The EJ&E rail line crosses each of these roadways. Increasing freight traffic from 3 to 5 trains a day to 20 plus trains will create significant gridlock, thus impacting our local and regional economy, and resulting in:

- 1). Loss of corporate investment: because of the time delays and reduced productivity of its workforce. corporations will seek to relocate out of the community This will result in a loss of real estate tax revenues, a decline in property values, an increase in vacancies, a reduction of sales tax revenues, and an overall a burden on the local economy as we struggle to meet service levels and expectations.

2). Loss of jobs: available jobs in the service and retail sectors will be dramatically reduced, as businesses will seek to open in other areas, due to consumers modifying shopping patterns as a result of increased traffic congestion.

Will 20 trains rumbling through town every day, and tying up traffic on the major arterials that service our town, will this be convenient for our customer/employees to get to into Barrington to conduct business? The answer is NO!

While grade separation on Route 59, along with Route 14 and Lake Cook, is an absolute necessity if this transaction is approved, grade separation on Route 59 (Hough Street) presents significant challenges. It would negatively impact access to existing commercial centers and identified redevelopment sites, making it difficult if not impossible to lease existing space and dooming any possibility for future redevelopment in this area. These impacts have not been thoroughly addressed in the DEIS. If it were effectively analyzed from my perspective, data would have supported a position of no further freight traffic on the EJ&E line through Barrington.

The Village of Barrington was in a position, prior to the announcement of the proposed CN acquisition, of readying itself for an influx of new investment in its commercial sector downtown, through transit-oriented developments ("TOD"). Due to the impacts that would result from a CN acquisition of the EJ&E, our downtown sites, may no longer be viable for residential mixed use development, thus causing disinvestment in the Village.

Based on the negative economic impacts to Barrington and the neighboring communities along this entire EJ&E line, this acquisition should not be allowed to go forward.