

3.7 Environmental Justice

3.7.1 Introduction

Although the president's directive on Environmental Justice in Executive Order 12898 technically does not apply to independent agencies like the Board, SEA has evaluated the potential impacts to determine if they could result in disproportionately high or adverse impacts on minority or low-income communities (FR 1994).

What is environmental justice?

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income by identifying and addressing the effects of transportation projects on the public, especially high or adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations.

3.7.2 Public Outreach

Before scheduling public scoping meetings, SEA considered whether potential language barriers in minority and low-income neighborhoods adjacent to the EJ&E rail line (including Chicago, Joliet, and Matteson, Illinois, and Gary, Indiana) would affect public participation. Using the most recent 2000 Census data, SEA identified and visited neighborhoods with potential language barriers and determined that both Spanish-language interpreters and handout materials were appropriate for all scoping meetings held in the Study Area in January 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). SEA then distributed posters written in English and Spanish to city halls and libraries in communities along the EJ&E rail line in advance of the scoping meetings. Chapter 9, Outreach and Coordination, provides additional detail on the outreach SEA undertook during scoping and preparation of this DEIS.

Following the scoping meetings, SEA undertook four initiatives designed to increase public outreach to minority and low-income communities along the EJ&E rail line and in Chicago during preparation of the DEIS:

- Mailed fact sheets and a request to attend these meetings to organizations whose members interact with minority and low-income residents.
- Contacted elected officials representing minority and low-income districts for guidance on additional outreach efforts.
- Contacted local media outlets that could inform minority and low-income residents of opportunities to comment on the Proposed Action.
- Identified and met with community leaders.

For additional information about public outreach activities, see Appendix A.

3.7.3 Minority and Low-Income Populations

Based on 2000 Census data, SEA defined the Study Area by identifying census block groups along the EJ&E rail line within 1,500 feet of rail segments where the number of trains would increase by at least eight trains per day and that would be designated as key routes for hazardous material transportation (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Along the CN rail line, SEA identified census block groups within 400 feet of rail segments where the number of trains would decrease by at least eight trains per day and the segments would not be designated key routes for hazardous materials transport. "Key routes" are discussed further in Section 3.2, Safety, above. SEA selected the 400-foot and 1,500-foot standards based on the distances where effects could be experienced such as noise, air emissions, hazardous material releases, and other effects.

SEA then analyzed the identified census block groups to determine which census block groups potentially represented minority or low-income neighborhoods. SEA calculated the number of residents of African-American, Hispanic (of any race), Native-American, Asian, or Hawaiian or Pacific-Island descent, as well as other minority groups. The number of people belonging to two or more minority groups was also calculated. SEA determined the minority-population percentage in each census block group by adding the number of minority residents together and dividing the result by the total population.

Next, SEA calculated the percentage of low-income residents in each area by dividing the number of people with income below the Federal-poverty threshold by the total population.

SEA established the following two criteria to determine minority and low-income census block groups for analysis. The criteria are:

- The minority or low-income population in a particular census block group must account for at least half of the census block group population.
- The census block group’s minority or low-income population percentage must be at least 10 percentage points above the percentage for the entire county where the particular census block group is located.

In applying these criteria, SEA calculated the minority and low-income population percentages for each of the five counties in the Study Area. SEA then added 10 percent to each of the calculated percentages. If the resulting sum was greater than 50 percent, SEA set the number at 50 percent. These calculated percentages became the minority and low-income criteria for each county in the Study Area as shown in Table 3.7-1, below.

Table 3.7-1. Minority and Low-Income Criteria Calculated by County		
County	Minority Criteria	Low-Income Criteria
Illinois		
Lake	48.3%	15.6%
Cook	50.0%	25.3%
DuPage	41.1%	14.9%
Will	46.4%	15.8%
Indiana		
Lake	50.0%	26.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000: Summary File 1 and Summary File 3, *Data Sets*, retrieved on February 15, 2008, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=DEC&_submenuId=datasets_0&_lang=en, 2000.

The Study Area includes 161 census block groups within 1,500 feet of rail segments that would be designated as key routes for hazardous material transportation. Of these, 67 census block groups meet the environmental justice criteria for minority status, and 26 meet the environmental justice criteria for low-income status. The distribution through the Study Area by county is shown in Table 3.7-2, below.

Table 3.7-2. Minority and Low-Income Census Block Groups Along the EJ&E Rail Line			
County	Total Census Block Groups	Minority Census Block Groups	Low-Income Census Block Groups
Illinois			
Lake	24	4	0
Cook	45	25	5
DuPage	21	8	1
Will	46	23	16
Indiana			
Lake	25	7	4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000: Summary File 1 and Summary File 3, *Data Sets*, retrieved on February 15, 2008, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=DEC&_submenuId=datasets_0&_lang=en, 2000.

SEA used these same environmental justice criteria to evaluate the census block groups within 400 feet of CN rail line segments located inside the EJ&E arc that would experience a reduction of at least eight trains per day. This analysis found 113 census block groups, with 35 meeting the criteria for minority status and eight meeting the criteria for low-income status. Table 3.7-3, below, shows the distribution of these census block groups along the CN rail line segments within the EJ&E arc.

Table 3.7-3. Minority and Low-Income Census Block Groups Along CN Rail Line Segments Within the EJ&E Arc				
CN Line	County	Total Census Block Groups	Minority Census Block Groups	Low-Income Census Block Groups
Illinois				
Wisconsin Central (Waukesha Subdivision)	Cook	39	6	0
Wisconsin Central (Waukesha Subdivision)	Lake	18	2	0
Illinois Central (Chicago Subdivision)	Cook	11	6	2
Grand Trunk Western (South Bend Subdivision)	Cook	33	21	6
Indiana				
Grand Trunk Western (South Bend Subdivision)	Lake	12	0	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000: Summary File 1 and Summary File 3, *Data Sets*, retrieved on February 15, 2008, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=DEC&_submenuId=datasets_0&_lang=en, 2000.

This page intentionally left blank