



SOUTH SUBURBAN MAYORS & MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

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Date Recd: _____

HDR File No. Proposed Canadian National Railway Acquisition
Of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway

- Burnham
- Calumet City
- Calumet Park
- Chicago Heights
- Country Club Hills

Scanned (Initial): _____

STAECT#: _____ South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association's
Cc: Original - Job File Issues Paper

- Crete
- Dixmoor

Introduction

- Dolton
- East Hazel Crest

HDR The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) represents 42 communities in southern Cook and Will Counties and is the designated sub-regional transportation planning organization through the CMAP MPO process. In addition, the Association works cooperatively with the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation (CSEDC) on matters of economic development opportunities in our sub-region.

- Flossmoor
- Ford Heights

SSMMA has filed with the Surface Transportation Board as a party of record in the proposed purchase of the EJ&E Railroad by the Canadian National Railway Corporation. The Association hosted a briefing for community officials on November 20, 2007 and a representative of Canadian National made a presentation and responded to questions.

- Glenwood
- Harvey

Subsequently, the Association's Transportation Advisory Group held a meeting on December 18, 2007 and invited communities represented by SSMMA to attend. At this meeting a number of issues related to the proposed purchase were discussed. The Association's Executive Director Ed Paesel was directed to prepare an issues paper for consideration and approval by SSMMA's Executive Committee on January 3, 2008 and SSMMA's Transportation Committee on January 8, 2008. This issues paper was discussed and approved by both committees and is the basis upon which SSMMA will seek to work cooperatively with Canadian National and the Surface Transportation Board throughout this process.

- Hazel Crest
- Homer Glen

Economic Development Opportunities

- Homewood
- Lansing

The SSMMA and CSEDC seek to work with the Canadian National Railway Corporation to assure that existing industrial facilities currently served by EJ&E are assured rail service after the purchase. In addition, we seek to work with CN and communities such as Riverdale, Dolton and Blue Island to maximize opportunities for rail served industrial/warehousing development along current CN rail lines.

- Lynwood
- Markham

- Matteson
- Midlothian

- Mokena
- Monee

- New Lenox
- Oak Forest

- Olympia Fields
- Orland Hills

- Orland Park
- Palos Heights

- Park Forest
- Phoenix

- Posen
- Richton Park

- Riverdale
- Robbins

- Sauk Village
- South Chicago Heights

- South Holland
- Steger

- Thornton
- Tinley Park

- University Park

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In addition, SSMMA and CSEDC will seek to work with CN and communities located along the EJ&E RR to identify existing industrial/distribution centers and to maximize their opportunities to develop, as well as identify potential new larger scale rail served industrial/distribution sites along the EJ&E RR that could be supported by the local communities.

The Association believes that there are many opportunities for positive economic development activities both for our local communities, as well as Canadian National Railway, providing we work cooperatively from the start in concert with our communities.

Star Line

The Association has long supported the Metra's Star Line as an important commuter rail option for the Chicago region. The Phase II Star Line project anticipates using the EJ&E Railroad right-of-way in the southern suburbs from Joliet eastward to Lynwood at the state line.

We continue to support the development of the Star Line and are seeking clarification from Canadian National of its intent to cooperate with Metra and our communities on this important project, as well as the conditions under which Metra will be allowed to use the existing tracks or right-of-way.

Potential Community Impacts

In the course of two meetings with many of the municipalities potentially affected by the purchase, we received a number of concerns caused by the potential tripling of traffic on the EJ&E.

Several of our communities, such as South Holland, Dolton and Lansing have expressed positive feedback on the purchase due to the potential reduction of train traffic on existing CN Lines in their communities and the resulting decrease in traffic congestion at various intersections.

Communities including Chicago Heights, South Chicago Heights, Park Forest, Matteson and Frankfort expressed concerns about at-grade crossings being blocked by more than 30 trains per day, each potentially a mile and a half long or longer. Major roads such as Cottage Grove Avenue, East End Avenue, Chicago Road and Western Avenues are vital routes for emergency vehicles and ambulances to St. James Hospital in Chicago Heights. In addition, both commercial and automobile traffic may be severely affected by long delays at at-grade crossings.

Currently in the area described above, there are no grade-separated crossings between IL-394 on the east and Orchard Avenue on the west, a distance of approximately 7 miles. A similar situation exists with no grade separated

crossings from Governors Highway in Matteson westward for many miles except at I-57.

We believe that additional grade separated crossings must be identified and constructed to mitigate these critical concerns. The SBC, Canadian National, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Cook and Will County Highway Departments and the CREATE Program team must work with local communities and SSMMA to identify the appropriate intersections, as well as identifying the necessary funding to complete these grade separations as soon as possible.

In addition, concerns were expressed about impacts on the Villages of Matteson and Park Forest on the proposed new rail switching connection between the EJ&E and CN relative to impacts on the Matteson downtown district and the Metra commuter rail station. All parties must work with those communities to address these serious concerns.

Another concern expressed in several communities is the impact of substantially more trains per day from a noise perspective on existing residential neighborhoods. We believe that noise walls or other acceptable types of noise mitigation measures should be explored in areas identified by the municipalities.

Further concerns were raised by several communities concerning the large increase of hazardous materials being transported along the EJ&E Rail Line. CN must work cooperatively with emergency services in the region to identify hazardous materials being transported, devise an emergency response plan and provide funding to communities to enable them to purchase the special equipment necessary to respond to an incident.

The Association also believes that the CREATE Project team, in light of this potential purchase and the substantial impact on altering the traffic flow in the Chicago area, should reprioritize CREATE funded projects and allocate additional resources to projects in the southern suburbs. This would especially be true for funding for additional grade separations described earlier, as well as rail to rail separations that would benefit traffic flow in our region.

Summary

In summary, the Association, the CSEDC and our municipalities seek to work with Canadian National and the Surface Transportation Board in a cooperative manner to maximize the potential positive economic benefits and mitigate the potential negative impacts identified in this paper.

We will also work through the formal STB process and actively participate in the Environmental Impact Statement process to identify additional concerns, as well as mitigation strategies.