

Park Forest

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Mayor
John A. Ostenburg

January 7, 2008

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Gordon T. Trafton II
Senior Vice President
Canadian National
17641 South Ashland Avenue
Homewood, IL 60430

Village Clerk
Dawn Robinson

Mr. Grafton:

Village Manager
Thomas Mick

The Village of Park Forest is in receipt of your December 21 letter to Mayor John Ostenburg regarding Canadian National's (CN) proposed acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway Company (EJ&E). The Village sees many issues that have the potential to adversely impact the Village of Park Forest.

Village Hall
350 Victory Drive
Park Forest, IL 60466
(708) 748-1112

1. **Congestion:** The letter references rail congestion in the area around the core of the City of Chicago and that diverting rail car traffic along the EJ&E arc will mitigate this problem. Preliminary estimates by CN are that the number of trains per day passing through Park Forest will increase by almost 400%. What will this mean in adverse impacts to the quality of life for Park Foresters? An at-grade rail crossing on Western Avenue in Park Forest already experiences frequent instances when traffic has to be diverted into residential neighborhoods along Orchard Drive, Westwood Drive and into the Village's Business Park along North Street and South Street due to a stopped train across the intersection.

**DownTown
Management Office**
226 Forest Blvd.
(708) 503-8153

Fire Department
156 Indianwood Blvd.
(708) 748-5605

Freedom Hall
410 Lakewood Blvd.
(708) 747-0580

Health Department
350 Victory Drive
(708) 748-1118

Police Department
200 Lakewood Blvd.
(708) 748-4700

**Recreation and
Parks Department**
350 Victory Drive
(708) 748-2005

Park Forest has additional concerns related to traffic congestion with the proposed new rail switching connection between the EJ&E and CN rail lines at the western edge of the community. The Village is not sure there is sufficient land available to accommodate such a switch. Furthermore, based on preliminary plans shared with the Village on this new rail switch, how slowly will trains, some with a length of a mile and a half or longer, have to be traveling to safely make this transition from CN line to the EJ&E line? Will this result in trains crossing Western Avenue at a 10 mile an hour rate of speed or less? Will it result in more trains having to stop and block the crossing at Western Avenue for extended periods of time?

2. **Noise:** As primarily a bedroom community, Park Forest has several residential neighborhoods that back onto the north and south side of the rail lines. A substantial increase in the number of trains and the associated noise will adversely impact the quality of life for these existing residents. What plans does CN have to mitigate this noise concern?
3. **Economic Development:** It has been noted that CN's proposed acquisition could enhance economic development opportunities for communities along the current EJ&E route. Park Forest believes that increased trains crossing Western Avenue will only hinder the Village's ability to develop and/or redevelop parcels of property along this major arterial road and in its business park. Any insights that CN might have in helping Park Forest understand otherwise would be greatly appreciated.
4. **Public Safety:** With a proposed 30 (and likely more) trains per day crossing Western Avenue, one of the Village's two direct routes used for emergency vehicle transports to hospitals into Chicago Heights and Olympia Fields will be severely compromised. The resulting traffic congestion will no doubt lead to lengthier emergency response times to those Park Forest neighborhoods on the north side rail road tracks. Additionally, a 400% increase in rail traffic will most surely result in a 400% increase of hazardous materials being transported through Park Forest.

While there may be other concerns for Park Forest related to CN's proposed acquisition, the above bullet points are the most important to our community. It would seem plausible that a grade separated crossing at Western Avenue might substantially reduce many of the concerns referenced in points 1, 2 and 4. Park Forest believes that sufficient noise reduction measures may mitigate the impacts noted in point 3.

The Village of Park Forest looks forward to working cooperatively with Canadian National so as to better understand the full scope of environmental impacts of the proposed purchase of the EJ&E. In CN's outreach initiative, the Village welcomes a meeting between Park Forest Officials and rail company. Please contact me at your soonest convenience so that the Village can continue this dialogue.

Sincerely,



Thomas K. Mick
Village Manager
Village of Park Forest

cc: Mayor John A. Ostenburg, Village of Park Forest
Village of Park Forest Board of Trustees
Phyllis Johnson-Ball, Surface Transportation Board
Victoria Rutson, Surface Transportation Board
Jim Kvedaras, Canadian National Senior Manager – U.S. Public and Government Affairs