

Subject: News on Vehe accounting, and summary CN Public Meeting and March
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Conversation: News on Vehe accounting, and summary CN Public Meeting and March

Greetings, neighbors. The most interesting news story of the week? The final accounting on Vehe is delayed. Again. I know, we expected completion by August 18. Read on.
<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/barrington/news/1118569,ba-vehenacc-082108-s1.articleprint>

ON CN ACQUISITION

To summarize the many, many emails and much web information, please read the following.

The Village of Lake Zurich has provided sample letter formats to express your concerns to public officials and the STB. Well done, Lake Zurich. The link:
<http://www.volz.org/index.asp?NID=239>

In brief, for Wednesday's Open Forum and Hearing, there will be ample traffic control, opportunities to speak (slots are still available as of today to make a public comment). There are groups of residents who will meet and march to the High School Wednesday. Info on one Protest March:

PROTEST MARCH-STOP THE TRAINS!

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27TH

WHO: BARRINGTON NEEDS EVERYONE! JOIN THE PROTEST MARCH TO THE STB HEARING. PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUR NEIGHBORS TO JOIN IN ON THE MARCH ROUTE. SOME SIGNS WILL BE AVAILABLE OR YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN.

WEAR RED!

WHERE: WE WILL LEAVE AT 4:30PM FROM FOX POINT AND PROCEED DOWN MAIN STREET TO THE HIGH SCHOOL. PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH WITH SHUTTLES GOING BACK AND FORTH. A WATER BREAK STATION WILL BE IN ROUTE, AND A POLICE ESCORT AT MAJOR INTERSECTIONS.

WHAT: OPEN HOUSE 4:00-6:00 PM AND FORMAL HEARING 6:00-9:00 PM AT THE HIGH SCHOOL. EACH FAMILY MEMBER NEEDS TO REGISTER. YOU DO NOT NEED TO STAY FOR THE HEARING.

WHY: THE GOAL IS TO HAVE OVER 6,000 PEOPLE ATTEND THIS HEARING. THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME PUBLIC OPINION WILL BE HEARD. IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND HAVE OUR VOICES HEARD!

Please take about seven minutes to watch a thought-provoking video. Don't be impatient.

Actually sit through it. Then ask yourself, as does the writer, whether you have time in your life for this community challenge.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiuXhEKPBoq>

Don't forget to visit <http://fightrailcongestion.com> for simple guidance on getting involved. And here are some of their recent postings.

FROM FIGHTRAILCONGESTION.COM, MONDAY

As the STB Public Hearings draw near and we make plans to defend our interests before the regulatory agency that will decide whether CN can move ahead with its planned acquisition of the EJ, we can't forget that Congress is considering a bill – HR 6707 – that would insure that community concerns in transactions of this type are not secondary to the interests of Big Rail. **SO DON'T FORGET THAT WE NEED TO FIGHT THIS BATTLE ON BOTH FRONTS!**

We know that CN has been passing around the Kool-Aid when it comes to spinning this deal, and the recently formed coalition of communities that have been convinced they will be winners if CN gets its way, is proof positive that the regulatory process for vetting a railroad applicant's claims is failing the public. H.R. 6707 would remedy that as the weighing of the public interest would get the level of scrutiny that is so missing from this deal and long overdue. With H.R. 6707 we wouldn't be dealing with a perfunctory DEIS that fails to accurately assess the environmental impacts on so many levels. As an example, let's take a look at CN's claims that this deal is good for the region and good for many of the region's communities.

Much of the DEIS analysis concludes that the environmental "benefits" to communities currently on CN rail lines would offset the harms done to communities along the EJ. This is based on the unsubstantiated assumption that CN's shift in operations will mean a permanent reduction in freight traffic along those current lines of operation. Given the projected growth in freight traffic in Chicago, it seems inevitable that at least a portion of that freight increase will end up as backfill on these current CN lines. As a result, the DEIS analysis is flawed in that it fails to calculate the reasonably foreseeable reality that the negative environmental impacts will actually be compounded (rather than just shifted) throughout the greater Chicagoland area as a result of this transaction.

Once the fallacy of "winner" communities is unmasked as the bait and switch maneuver that it is, it is difficult to find any real benefits that the greater

Chicagoland region will derive from this transaction. In its application, CN states that rail jobs will be lost; this transaction threatens to siphon public funds from the CREATE project which would have done more to ease congestion for the other Class I railroads that operate in the region and make things better for all communities coping with freight; and, no shippers have come forward to guarantee that the purported cost savings they derive from CN operating efficiencies would accrue to them or the end consumer. All opponents hear is that this transaction would benefit the region and the nation. Nonetheless, the DEIS fails to provide any specific substantiation to that claim. This charade needs to end and H.R. 6707 is the way to do it!

So, plan to be at an STB hearing to make these points -- THERE ARE STILL SPEAKER SLOTS OPEN AT MOST OF THEM, SO DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY. Write letters to the editor when you see articles that continue to mislead the public. And finally, contact your Members of Congress and ask that they pass H.R. 6707 before Congress adjourns. For more information, go to www.FightRailCongestion.com.

FROM FIGHTRAILCONGESTION.COM, FRIDAY

Next week the STB will begin to hear from people in the region about what it will mean to you to have CN transform the EJ into a freight superhighway. There will be real costs to real people up and down the line. In the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) these costs were labeled "negligible," but we know they're not.

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING IMPACTS IGNORED: Although the DEIS admits that "some homes within 250 feet of a rail line with 20 additional trains could experience a decrease in property value" it concluded that this would have "only minor, negligible effects" if the transaction were to be approved. There is no attempt by SEA to actually determine how many homes along the EJ are within 250 feet of the line and then calculate the potential property value loss in any way, so it is hard to understand how SEA came to the conclusion that it is a non-issue. This is particularly problematic given the state of today's housing market and the fact that much of the residential growth along the EJ has been recent. An August 2008 Zillow real estate study in the greater Chicagoland market said that about a third of all homes sold in 2006 and 2007 in the Chicago area are now financially "under water," meaning their owners have negative equity in the property. How many homes along the EJ will become negative equity situations if their values drop by a significant percentage? That the DEIS fails to take a hard look at this possibility when the federal government is enacting expensive programs to prevent home foreclosures is unacceptable.

REGIONAL BUSINESS IMPACTS IGNORED: The DEIS concludes that the only jobs impact – direct, indirect or induced – would be in the rail industry, and that the 280 rail job losses would minimally impact the greater Chicagoland economy. This overly narrow focus on business impacts completely ignores the business and job losses that will likely occur in communities along the EJ. If consumers cannot easily get to their local businesses, these businesses will close in the communities adjacent to the EJ with only those having the financial resources having an option to relocate to other areas. This will decimate the sales tax base of impacted communities and create commercial ghost towns along the EJ. This analysis omission must be addressed and rectified in the FEIS.

LOCAL TAX BASE HARMS IGNORED: The fiscal health of the communities located along the EJ is based on revenues derived from property and sales taxes. That revenue is used to support school districts and maintain first responder capabilities in the region. The failure of the DEIS to calculate the ripple effect harms from a reduction in local business activity and property values, and then assess how that will harm the tax bases of these localities will have long-term consequences for the people who live in these communities now and for generations to come. The DEIS is wholly inadequate in examining the socioeconomic consequences that are likely to occur along the EJ if this transaction is approved.

Next Monday begins an eight hearing process that enables all of us to speak our minds and defend our interests against Big Rail. It is our time to say no to a private business deal that is bad for the region. If you own a business, a home, send your children to a school, or count on first responder services from a community located along the EJ, you will be impacted. Get out to a hearing and recruit others to get involved – more info can be found at www.FightRailCongestion.com. If we are united and vocal, we can make a real difference!

FROM FROM FIGHTRAILCONGESTION.COM, THURSDAY

As you prepare for the upcoming STB hearings on CN's planned acquisition of the EJ, we invite you to go to the www.FightRailCongestion.com website to review a TRAC document that summarizes the many flaws with the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) that was released by the STB for public comment. The "Twenty-Plus Problems with the DEIS" white paper can be found under the "Coalition Documents" category of the "Documents" tab of the website. This summary has been prepared to highlight general problems with the DEIS that are applicable to all the communities along the EJ. Specific TRAC

communities are also doing additional analysis to determine the DEIS shortcomings as it relates to their own localized impacts.

We have tried to make the TRAC summary simple and easy to read for the general public, but to the extent that there are serious technical flaws that need to be addressed, we have done so. The TRAC communities believe it is essential that the public fully understand the breadth of impacts we can expect to experience in the region. Even those communities that believe CN's acquisition of the EJ will be a positive for them should understand that some of what they have been led to believe is not wholly accurate. The benefit of a comprehensive review process that is based on a sound assessment of environmental impacts is necessary and we need to insure that this happens before a decision is made on this deal.

So, don't forget to get out to one of the eight upcoming hearings; educate your friends, neighbors and families on this issue; and ask them to register on the website to receive future action alerts.

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