

## STOP THE CPKC MERGER (from Barbara Evans, Gifford Park Assoc.)

The Canadian Pacific's proposed acquisition of the Kansas City Southern railroad will have such negative effects on communities in our area that joining the cities of Elgin and Woodale to STOP THE CPKC were the villages of Roselle, Bartlett, Itasca, Bensonville, Hanover Park and Schaumburg. Metra also joined the coalition because freight trains on the CPKC system would have precedence over passenger trains. Giving much support to this coalition have been Sen. Dick Durban and IL-District 8 Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi.

Unfortunately, though the Federal Surface Transportation Board has yet to make the final determination of whether the merger can take place, it is assumed by many to be a done deal because that board has a record of rubber stamping requests from rail companies. Nevertheless, the STOP THE CPKC is not giving up and is encouraging everyone to send a message voicing opposition to the merger.

But first, at that site you should download the three volumes of the "Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Acquisition" at [www.dropbox.com/sh/e7ezaknrpo00nie/AAA5XpbNzf7ruJNGMsIDIS8Aa](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/e7ezaknrpo00nie/AAA5XpbNzf7ruJNGMsIDIS8Aa) for in them you will find some statements especially relevant to Elgin, which will see an increase of 11 freight trains per day, trains which under the Proposed Acquisition may be 2 miles long (as opposed to the 1 1/2 mile limit they now have).

For example, in Vol. 1's Section 3.1 you will learn that the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis [OEA] concluded that the Proposed Acquisition would "result in only minor adverse impacts on freight rail safety." However, it observed, "the projected increase in rail traffic that would occur would increase the predicted risk of an incident (such as a derailment or other accident) occurring on certain lines in the combined CPKC system." And our area's line would be one of those "certain" lines.

Are we expected to then applaud the statement that "OEA expects that any potential increase in rail accidents on rail lines in the combined CPKC system would be partially or entirely offset by a decrease in the number of accidents on other rail lines and on highways"?

Similarly, in the same section you will learn that "across all of the rail line segments on which the transportation of hazardous materials would increase, OEA projects that a total of 12.88 releases would occur per year, compared to 10.36 releases that now occur. But "OEA expects that the majority of releases that would occur would be minor and would not have the potential to result in environmental impacts, injuries or fatalities."

Are we expected to therefore applaud the statement that "OEA expects that any potential increase in the number of releases along rail line segments on the combined CPKC network would be partially offset by a reduction in the number of releases along other rail lines owned and operated by other railroad companies"? Hardly, especially as freight trains currently coming through Elgin already transport hazardous material.

In the short paragraph of Vol. 1's Section 3.12, OEA notes that "although commenters expressed concern that the projected increase in rail traffic would increase the risk of spills of hazardous materials into waterways, the probability of an incident occurring that could result in a release of hazardous materials into waterways or onto the ground where it affect ground water is and would remain very low."

But as Councilwoman Tish Powell who was in attendance at GPA's general membership meeting on 2/16 said, the possibility of a derailment in Elgin gives her nightmares, for Elgin's tracks are almost level with the Fox River, which is the source of the city's drinking water. And as the recent derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, revealed, the Biden administration has not moved to reinstate the Obama-era safety rule aimed at expanding the use of better braking technology on trains, which lead a former federal safety official to recently warn Congress that without better brakes, "there will be more derailments [and] more releases of hazardous materials."

The same reasoning used by OEA to justify its conclusions in Section 3.1 are used in Section 3.7 to in essence make negligible the expectation that "localized emissions of air pollutants from locomotives would increase along some rail line segments." Why should this not be of concern? Because, as OEA explained, "The Proposed Acquisition "could result in an overall decrease in emissions due to the expected diversion of freight from truck to rail transportation and the resulting removal of approximately 64,000 trucks per year from highways." Though perhaps good news for the environment, it will unlikely be applauded by those of us whose rail lines will carry much more traffic.

Initially, the OEA reported that the Proposed Acquisition would result in only minor adverse impacts on grade crossing delay, a conclusion reached after studying a limited number of grade crossings. Public comments, however, led OEA to expand its investigations to include all 1,365 grade crossings in its study area. These results are published in blue in Section 3.3.

Of especial interest to Elginites should be the finding that OEA observed that "while possible, it is unlikely that a train would become stopped in a position where it blocks such grade crossings for a substantial amount of time during an emergency situation. However, were that to occur, emergency services would be severely affected."

Because Elgin's three crossings are so close together and the trains up to 2 miles long, it is instead likely that those on the east side of Elgin, for example, will experience significant delays in getting to the city's two hospitals, which are both on the west side. (Unlike Itasca, however, Elgin at least has fire stations on both sides of the tracks.)

In blue is also the observation that "because average rail traffic would increase, the frequency with which emergency vehicles would be delayed by trains would likely increase."

Section 3.6 was at first just infuriating [to me], for OEA observes that those "located near existing CP and KCS rail lines already experience intermittent train noise and have for many years." And OEA "does not expect that the Proposed Acquisition would cause individual trains on those rail lines to become substantially louder or to become audible in places where they are not currently." But OEA does go on to admit that "the projected increase in rail traffic would make rail-related noise more frequent, which would result in a higher day-night average noise level."

I've just given you a sampling of the assessments of the effects of the Proposed Acquisition covered in Volume 1's Section 3. And while it took 15 minutes to download all three volumes of the report, I would encourage you to do so, for more ammunition will likely be found there for those who wish to voice their opposition for Canadian Pacific's Proposed Acquisition of the Kansas City Southern railroad.

