

## Front Page of the South Suburban News:



### Letter to the Editor: Sheila Chalmers-Currin

## A Canadian National Merger with Kansas City Southern Would Worsen Chicagoland's Congestion Problems

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*By Mayor Sheila Chalmers-Currin, Village of Matteson*

The Chicago metro area is known as one of the most congested choke points for train traffic in North America - something those of us who live here know all too well. It's long been a sore subject threatening public safety by delaying ambulances, fire trucks, school buses and general traffic flow on local streets and highways. And it's why we've taken on railroads in the past to share our concerns about any rail merger or consolidation that will impact traffic flow in our communities.

Canadian National's (CN) current bid to acquire Kansas City Southern (KCS) Railroad has me greatly concerned; this merger will make our congestion problems even worse in our suburban Chicago communities. More CN trains mean motorists waiting at crossings, delays to Metra trains at CN rail junctions, and increased delays and reduced on time performance for Amtrak services over CN lines, which include the Illini, Saluki and City of New Orleans.



Just as concerning is the complete dismissal of the issue offered by CN in a recent [opinion column](#), in which the railroad actually claimed to “solve Chicago’s longstanding rail congestion problem” by simply going “around the core of the city” and bypassing “downtown Chicago by about 30 miles to the south, looping through Matteson and then heading east towards Indiana.”

Those comments indicate everything I fear about a CN-KCS deal – the dramatically increased traffic flow of a CN-KCS combination hinges on its ability to run additional trains through our communities on the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern (EJ&E) rail line. If this merger proceeds, we stand to see even longer wait times at crossings, increases in Metra delays, increases in noise level for residents living near the tracks, and increased environmental impacts on local communities.

And in case it hasn’t been made clear to CN: Matteson, Joliet, Barrington and many more communities on the EJ&E are very much a part of the Chicago metro area. Our congestion problems feed into the city’s congestion problems. Our Metra and Amtrak delays feed into the city of Chicago’s delays. It’s all interconnected.

For example, in Matteson there is an abundance of commercial development that’s ongoing, including multiple regional Amazon distribution sites and the prospects of a new tax-generating casino. All of this development means tens of thousands of cars per day traveling through our community. The increased train traffic means that any delays at motorist crossings will only further exacerbate these issues.

There is a better alternative that could actually lighten train traffic and mitigate congestion in the Chicago metro area. Canadian Pacific already has a friendly agreement to combine with KCS that would substitute this proposed increased suburban freight traffic and shift it to rural eastern Iowa. Four communities in Iowa have come out publicly in favor of the deal and support additional options for shippers in their communities.

The Surface Transportation Board right now is deciding whether to allow CN to move ahead with a KCS merger. The STB could block the deal if they decide it isn’t in the public interest.

Is this deal in Chicago’s best interest? I don’t believe so. Our communities must come together to call for local, state and federal lawmakers to weigh in with the STB against a CN-KCS merger, and I urge my fellow residents to join me in calling on all Illinois civic leaders to join the fight against this merger. It’s bad for congestion, bad for Chicago, and bad for Matteson.

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