



Office of the City Clerk

City Hall
121 N. LaSalle St.
Room 107
Chicago, IL 60602
www.chicityclerk.com

Legislation Text

File #: R2017-737, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago is a home rule unit of government pursuant to the 1970 Illinois Constitution, Article VII, Section 6 (a); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to its home rule power, the City of Chicago may exercise any power and perform any function relating to its government and affairs including the power to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety, morals, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, as the rail capital of the country, with about one-third of the freights that travel in this country pass through the City, Chicago has a vested interest in matters pertaining to freight traffic; and

WHEREAS, freight rail is divided into three classifications with Class I being the largest, and Chicago is the only city in the United States where six of the seven Class I operators interconnect; and

WHEREAS, the Vice President of government affairs for CSX, Tom Livingston refers to Chicago as "the Super Bowl of freight rail;" and

WHEREAS, logistics and economic development experts predict a rising volume of goods passing through East Coast seaports, created by a wider Panama Canal and more shipments traveling through the Suez Canal from Southeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the fear of rising energy costs and driver shortages are pushing shippers away from trucking and leading to an increase in freight rail; and

WHEREAS, companies like CSX, which is one of the two largest railroad companies that hauls goods from the East, can capitalize on this prediction if they have the capacity to handle the eventual increase in demand; and

WHEREAS, one of the busiest areas, the 75th Street Corridor, also known as the Belt Junction, is considered the worst choke point for rail movement in Chicago where eight tracks from the east and five from the west gradually narrow into two; and

WHEREAS, Forest Hill Junction, which is two miles west from 75th Street Corridor, is a six-track intersection shared by Amtrak, commuter trains, and freight rail; and

WHEREAS, a study conducted by Amtrak in 2015 found that a train shipment spends an average of 30 hours traversing the Chicago region alone, a stark contrast to the 48 hours it takes to travel from Los Angeles to Chicago; and

WHEREAS, according to the same Amtrak study, between \$657 billion and \$799 billion worth of goods travel through the Chicago area annually; and

WHEREAS, the CEO of CSX said that "clearly, Chicago is overbuilt" and has considered partnering with another railroad to divert freight from the Chicago area; and

WHEREAS, the CEO of Canadian Pacific told investors in May 2017 that his line was in negotiations with CSX to form a joint marketing and operating agreement to avoid Chicago switching yards and bypass chokepoints; and

WHEREAS, CSX has furloughed 62 of its 130 employees from Barr Yard in Riverdale, Illinois, a switching facility that funnels most of CSX freight traffic through Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes Basin Transportation company filed an application on May 3, 2017 with the Surface Transportation Board seeking permission to build a \$2.8 billion, 261 mile alternative for rail traffic; and

WHEREAS, Norfolk Southern Railway and Union Pacific Railroad have both stated that they would not utilize the Great Lakes Basin Transportation's railroad line; and

WHEREAS, United States Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois said that Norfolk and Union Pacific's opposition brings "into question the demand and need for an additional rail line;" and

WHEREAS, to alleviate the problems of intersections and junctions, freight and rail companies, as well as travelers, commuters, and consumers have banded together with Amtrak, Metra, the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and the U.S. Department of Transportation to form the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program also known as "CREATE;" and

WHEREAS, CREATE has identified 70 projects throughout the Chicago metropolitan region that would drastically reduce delays and better manage congestions; and

WHEREAS, CREATE raised \$1.4 billion and has used \$1 billion to complete 28 of the 70 projects identified; and

WHEREAS, one of the projects was the Englewood Junction, which was the worst choke point in the region; and

WHEREAS, CREATE has eliminated 7,500 annual hours of delays for commuters by constructing an overpass at the Englewood Junction to separate 46 freight trains, 78 Metra trains, and 14 Amtrak trains that pass through daily; and

WHEREAS, CREATE proposed a project to add four more tracts at the 75th Street Corridor to alleviate the congestion and conflict between 30 Metra commuter trains and 35 freight trains every day; and

WHEREAS, CREATE has proposed other projects including a railroad flyover bridge at the Forest Hill Junction, south of the troublesome 71st Street grade crossing, where CSX freight

trains are forced to wait for Metra passenger trains to pass, and a railroad flyover bridge to connect Metra's South West Service from Will County to its Rock Island Line in Joliet; and

WHEREAS, a lack of investment in infrastructure projects like the 75th Street Corridor and Forest Hill Junction harms the economy; and

WHEREAS, it appears that the drivers and beneficiaries of Chicago's national transportation hub support infrastructure projects like the 75th Street Corridor and Forest Hill Junction as proposed by the experts at CREATE instead of building a new private rail; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:

That the members of the City Council of the City of Chicago oppose the proposal filed by the Great Lakes Basin Transportation and calls upon the Surface Transportation Board to reject the application to build a new rail line; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commissioners of the Chicago Department of Transportation and the Department of Planning and Development, the members of CREATE, and the CSX railroad company appear before the Committee on Transportation and Public Way to testify regarding progress on their objectives, further, that CSX appear to detail its future plans in the Chicago area.