



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 22-3264, Version: 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING THE VILLAGE OF ELMWOOD PARK'S EFFORTS TO CONSTRUCT A WEST GRAND AVENUE GRADE SEPARATION

WHEREAS, the Village of Elmwood Park, a thriving Cook County suburb in close proximity to the City of Chicago, comprises a community of nearly 25,000 residents and boasts first-class services and facilities, including a transportation network that serves the region; and

WHEREAS, the transportation infrastructure in Elmwood Park is dangerously impeded by the West Grand Avenue highway-railroad at-grade crossing and poses a significant safety hazard to the public at large due to the metrics of the crossing. West Grand Avenue is intersected by three Canadian Pacific rail tracks, which are also utilized by Metra and is the widest crossing in Illinois at 366 feet; and

WHEREAS, the West Grand Avenue intersection has been plagued with accidents, including injuries and fatalities, for decades. From 1956 to 2005, there were 45 crashes including 27 injuries and 7 fatalities. From 2014 through 2018, there were 36 recorded crashes. On November 23, 2005, the day before Thanksgiving when traffic is historically heavy, a Metra train collided with 6 vehicles that were stopped on the tracks and pushed these vehicles into secondary impacts with 12 other vehicles, injuring 10 people; and

WHEREAS, upon a National Transportation Safety Board investigation of the 2005 accident, the Board's sole recommendation to improve safety at the crossing was for the Governor of Illinois to "Require the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois Department of Transportation to construct a grade separation in place of the West Grand Avenue grade crossing, and provide the necessary resources to effect this change"; and

WHEREAS, the safety quotient of the West Grand Avenue corridor, which currently carries more than 25,000 vehicles and 128 freight and commuter trains daily, will likely be further strained beyond acceptable metrics due to the proposed merger of Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) with Kansas City Southern (KCS) as noted in their Surface Transportation Board merger application of 2021. The application highlights increases in projected train traffic and longer trains of the Milwaukee District West Line/West Grand Avenue Corridor. The application also notes a minimum of 7.1 additional trains per day.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby urge Canadian Pacific Railway and Kansas City Southern to partner with Elmwood Park in the construction of the West Grand Avenue project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the CP and KCS provide financial assistance toward the existing shortfall, to further aid the Village of Elmwood Park in seeking and securing any other state/federal funding, and to work with the Village of Elmwood Park until the project reaches fruition so that the overarching and unrelenting safety concerns are entirely mitigated for the public at large.