

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2017

Secretary Randall S. Blankenhorn
Illinois Department of Transportation
Hanley Building
2300 S. Dirksen Parkway
Springfield, IL 62764



Secretary Dave Ross
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Hill Farms State Transportation Building
4802 Sheboygan Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Secretary Blankenhorn,

We are writing to request that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) conduct a Freight Impact Study before moving forward with any proposals to increase Amtrak's service on the Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha line.

As you know, as part of an effort to increase service of Amtrak's Hiawatha Line trains, a 10,000-foot holding track for freight trains would be built in communities, including near homes, schools, parks, businesses, and doctor's offices. This project could impact Lake Forest, Deerfield, Northbrook, Bannockburn, and Glenview in our congressional districts. We appreciate that IDOT and WisDOT, along with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), provided an Environmental Assessment on certain aspects of the proposed increase in train service. However, given the widespread impact this expansion will have on surrounding communities, we have repeatedly asked the FRA to complete a full Environmental Impact Study (EIS) before this project is completed. In addition, we believe it is important for IDOT and WisDOT to complete a Freight Impact Study.

At this time, we do not yet understand the full impact of idling and holding freight trains so near these highly-populated areas. The potential increase in noise and vibrations could considerably impact residents in their homes, local businesses, patients at doctor's visits, and children in school. Residents have raised concerns about the holding track negatively impacting their property values due to what is effectively a temporary rail freight yard adjoining their homes.

We are also concerned that freight traffic entering and leaving the proposed holding track may present safety risks to the impacted communities. For example, the Village of Glenview has indicated that this holding track would significantly impact emergency services along West Lake Avenue, which connects a fire station, high school, and hospital.

Before this project proceeds, we urge you to conduct a Freight Impact Study to fully examine the impact of any potential plan to expand Amtrak's Hiawatha Line. Thank you for your consideration. Should you need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Zaida Ricker in Rep. Schneider's office at (202) 225-4835 or Zaida.Ricker@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Bradley S. Schneider
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Jan Schakowsky
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

CC: Acting Administrator Heath Hall, Federal Railroad Administration
Mayor Rob Lansing, City of Lake Forest
Mayor Harriet Rosenthal, Village of Deerfield
Village President Sandra E. Frum, Village of Northbrook
Village President Jim Patterson, Village of Glenview
Village President Frank "Bud" Rothing, Village of Bannockburn