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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
75th STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

PUBLIC MEETING

Tuesday, June 7, 2011
6:00 p.m.
St. Rita High School
7740 South Western Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Reported by: Donna T. Wadlington, CSR

1 MS. WAHL: Hello, everyone. Can you
2 hear me?

3 It's traditional to start a
4 railway meeting with a safety message to make
5 sure that everyone is safe. I want to point out
6 that there are three exits to this room. There,
7 there and there.

8 Is there anyone here who would
9 have a hard time making a quick exit from this
10 room?

11 Okay, great.

12 The other question I would
13 like to ask you is who here in this room knows
14 CPR? Great. Look around and take a note of
15 that. And for those of you who know CPR,
16 there's an AED device outside of that door and
17 around the corner in case we need it.

18 If we need to evacuate the
19 building, there's a gathering point in the
20 parking lot outside, in the middle of the
21 parking lot. That's where we'll all go. If
22 someone needs to call 911. I'll call 911, and

1 Doug Knuth here will be our backup. And,
2 unfortunately, it's not rainy and cool so we --
3 (inaudible).

4 Does anyone have any more
5 questions about safety? In that case, we'll be
6 able to begin.

7 MS. BOYD: Good evening, everyone. My
8 name is Marva Boyd. I'm the Acting Chief of
9 Staff at the Illinois Department of
10 Transportation.

11 RESPONSE: We can't hear you.

12 MS. BOYD: Can you hear me now?

13 Okay. Sorry about that. We
14 should have done a dress rehearsal.

15 Good evening, everyone. My
16 name is Marva Boyd. I'm the Acting Chief of
17 Staff at the Illinois Department of
18 Transportation, and I'm absolutely thrilled to
19 be here. I am here to extend a very warm
20 welcome to each and every one of you and to
21 thank you all for taking time off your busy
22 schedules for joining us here tonight to talk

1 about the 75th Street Corridor Improvement
2 Project.

3 This 75th Street Corridor
4 Improvement Project is part of the Chicago
5 Regional and Transportation Efficiency Program,
6 which is a region-wide initiative to improve
7 Chicago's rail infrastructure, and it also
8 happens to be one of Illinois' largest and most
9 important projects. This project is important
10 because it will help move rail passengers,
11 freight and vehicles through your communities
12 more efficiently.

13 And this project is not only
14 about the railroad's needs. It's about
15 communities and your neighborhoods. What this
16 is going to mean for your neighborhoods is that
17 there will be improved mobility, less
18 congestion, better passenger rail service and
19 enhanced safety.

20 We are all partners in this
21 effort, and we want you to share your ideas,
22 your questions and your concerns. We are

1 committed to hearing you throughout this process
2 and integrating your comments into the project.
3 So together we hope to develop this project in
4 alignment with your community's values and
5 interests.

6 With that said, I also want to
7 state that the presentation that you're going to
8 see today is going to give you an overview of
9 the purpose of the 75th Street CIP. The needs
10 of the project we will address and ways that you
11 can get involved.

12 Turn it up higher? You can't
13 hear me? Back there, can you hear me.

14 RESPONSE: No.

15 MS. BOYD: Okay. Sorry about that.

16 If you have any questions, we
17 recommend that you jot them down, and someone
18 will come around and pick up cards, and we will
19 address questions along the way. After the
20 presentation, we will collect those cards.

21 At this time I would like to
22 introduce Jakita Trotter, who has been a part of

1 this project for quite some time. She's on the
2 project team with IDOT and she's been very --
3 heavily involved with the CREATE project. So,
4 once again, thank you. Welcome and I hope you
5 enjoy the presentation. Jakita.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. TROTTER: Thank you, Marva.

8 Hello. I'm Jakita Trotter and
9 I am with the Illinois Department of
10 Transportation and part of the CREATE, 75th
11 Street Corridor Improvement Project team, and
12 thank you very much for attending this evening.

13 We're anxious to get started
14 with this. You've been briefed and -- oh, also,
15 before I begin, I would like to thank Gary
16 DeCesare. Can you hear me? I'm sorry.

17 I would like to thank Gary
18 DeCesare, St. Rita, for having space for us to
19 have our public meeting this evening. Thank you
20 very much.

21 We are going to be passing out
22 cards and pens for you to jot your questions

1 down that you may have after the presentation.
2 You know, as you watch the presentation, as
3 questions come up, place them down and the cards
4 will be collected from you.

5 So right now I'm going to
6 introduce two of the key project members of the
7 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project. That
8 would be Larry Wilson, who is with the Illinois
9 Department of Transportation and CREATE Section
10 Chief, and Doug Knuth, who is with Jacobs
11 Engineering.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. KNUTH: We are going to run the
14 presentation now. I apologize to you who have
15 already seen it, but some people waited until
16 this formal session to see the presentation, so
17 we've shortened it up a little bit, but it's
18 going to be the same basic presentation. So we
19 are going to run that again.

20 I see Gretchen is passing out
21 cards now. So you can fill out those cards with
22 questions as we are going through the

1 presentation, and we will respond to those
2 afterwards.

3 (WHEREUPON, the video
4 presentation was played.)

5 MS. TROTTER: Well, is everyone still
6 awake here?

7 RESPONSE: Yes.

8 MS. TROTTER: We have come to the part
9 of the program where it's question and answer
10 time. And although I think that there was some
11 like mini public meetings that was held in the
12 exhibit room, nonetheless, we still want to hear
13 your questions; particularly that might have
14 come up while watching the presentation.

15 So Gretchen and Denise will
16 collect the cards from you. Are there any
17 cards, first of all, to be collected? If there
18 are, please raise your hand.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We didn't get
20 any cards.

21 MS. TROTTER: Okay. Will a project
22 team member please collect the cards.

1 We're going to have someone
2 that is well known in the community, a tireless
3 community leader, well-respected and his name is
4 Carlos Nelson. He's the Executive Director of
5 the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development
6 Corporation, and he's also so graciously
7 volunteered to be the facilitator at this public
8 meeting. Carlos.

9 MR. NELSON: Thank you very much,
10 Jakita.

11 I am glad to see the faces in
12 the audience. I really think on a situation
13 like this this room should really be jammed
14 packed. I think so -- you saw the calendar of
15 events and the next public meeting I think is in
16 the fall of 2011, right?

17 RESPONSE: Right.

18 MR. NELSON: You make sure if you're
19 hear and you know a person and you know three
20 people, you make sure you tell those three
21 people that they should be here. Because this
22 is a critical opportunity for us to really have

1 a voice in a project that is going to have a
2 large impact on our lives and where we live.

3 So will everyone commit to
4 making certain that they tell at least three
5 people, once we have a date? Show of hands that
6 you will commit to having more people here.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We'll tell them
8 again.

9 MR. NELSON: Tell them again.

10 All right. So let me --
11 couple more cards.

12 As you get answers from some
13 of these experts for some of these questions,
14 it's not too late. If you want to write down
15 another question, please do. I think we've got
16 about another 30 to 45 minutes. I know some of
17 us are anxious to get back out here to the heat.

18 The Miami Heat, right.

19 All right. How will the 75th
20 Street CIP be funded and have those funds been
21 appropriated? So, once again, how has this
22 project been funded and have those funds been

1 appropriated?

2 Mr. Larry Wilson, IDOT.

3 MR. WILSON: That's a great question,
4 folks.

5 At this point we have funding
6 to finish the environmental impact statement
7 process and to finish what's called the
8 preliminary design of the project. That means
9 that the project is designed enough so that all
10 these analysis can be done, but it's not fully
11 designed so it can be built. Additional funds
12 will be needed to finish the final design of the
13 project, at which point then we will need
14 construction funds.

15 We do not have any additional
16 funds, other than the funds to complete this
17 project and to complete a preliminary design for
18 CIS. Any followup?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's a
20 question, how will it be funded?

21 MR. WILSON: How will it be funded?
22 Well, that's a great question, too.

1 CREATE being a partnership
2 between private railroads, the city, the state
3 and the Federal Government, all of those
4 entities are chipping in money for this project.
5 So there will be some railroad money. There
6 will be some public money probably from the
7 federal level, state level and city level, and
8 even from some other agencies like Metra as such
9 time as that money is needed.

10 So we spread the -- we spread
11 the funding out across to different partners.
12 But clearly, we can't do a project of this size
13 without some sizable money -- sizable money from
14 the Federal Government.

15 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Larry.

16 All right. We've got a couple
17 of questions about specific locations. This is
18 great. Let's start with the 71st and Bell
19 railroad crossing is reworked and we saw a nice
20 picture of it with the kids standing right along
21 the train line. Will it affect the homes in
22 that area? That's a pretty broad term. Will it

1 affect the homes in that area?

2 MR. KNUTH: Well, the issue is that
3 Bell is very close to the railroad tracks. It's
4 parallel to the railroad tracks, and it's the
5 first street away from the railroad. And so
6 there's concern that if, for instance, we took
7 71st Street underneath the tracks, as they are
8 today, or over the tracks, as they are today,
9 you wouldn't be able to connect Bell anymore to
10 71st Street because it would either be up in the
11 air or down in the ground.

12 While those are certainly
13 options, another option is to take the railroad
14 over 71st Street on a structure. And if that's
15 the case, 71st Street would stay about like it
16 is today, and Bell would continue to connect to
17 71st Street. You would still be able to come
18 out from Bell to 71st Street and turn right or
19 left onto 71st. Those are the kinds of
20 alternatives we're looking at right now.

21 And, you know, in these coming
22 weeks we will be evaluating those based, in

1 part, on the impact -- input we get here tonight
2 and the impact of those various alternatives.
3 And we'll come back at this next meeting and
4 show you what the options are, what the impacts
5 are and our goal is to have the minimum impact
6 to the residences in the area.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A question also
8 involves -- (inaudible) -- structurally
9 impacting the homes.

10 MR. KNUTH: You know, as far as
11 construction impacts, you know, these days we
12 try to do construction using techniques that
13 create the least vibration during construction.
14 We drill in foundations rather than dry piles.
15 Because dry piles breaks foundations in the
16 neighborhood, so we don't do that kind of
17 foundation in the city.

18 So we look to minimize impact
19 and damage from the construction itself, too.

20 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Doug. That's
21 Doug Knuth with Jacobs Engineering.

22 Doug's been in the -- in this

1 industry for a long, long time. In fact, he and
2 George Pullman were the first graduating class.
3 Maybe not that old.

4 (Laughter.)

5 All right. Another question
6 about a specific location. Is the project
7 expected to affect property between 76th and
8 77th, Western to Maplewood? So basically where
9 we're standing, right in this footprint right
10 here.

11 Once again, is the project
12 expected to affect property between 76th and
13 77th, Western to Maplewood? And, once again,
14 affect is a very broad term.

15 MR. KNUTH: It is a broad term.

16 And to tell you the truth, I
17 need someone -- some help on which street is
18 Maplewood. Maplewood is to the west. Okay. I
19 know where we're talking about.

20 And in that area, I would
21 expect all the construction to happen within the
22 railroad right-of-way. I wouldn't expect any

1 construction around western outside of the
2 existing railroad properties. Nothing that I'm
3 seeing right now. Certainly not as far as 76th,
4 77th. So I wouldn't expect any changes there.
5 There may be bridge construction on the railroad
6 bridges over Western, and there may be track
7 construction up on top of those bridges. Both
8 of those are likely, but that would all be
9 within the railroad right-of-way. Does that
10 answer the question?

11 MR. NELSON: Okay. All right.

12 Here's a person that is
13 obviously keeping their finger to the pulse,
14 this and other types of construction projects.
15 So we'll take them individually.

16 During construction how will
17 the noise from the construction phase be managed
18 on behalf of the residents? So it's not about a
19 specific location, but depending on the types of
20 construction that may go on, whether we're
21 talking grade crossing or grade separation,
22 we're talking the separation from train line,

1 the two train lines, the line of additional
2 train line. How will the noise from the
3 construction phase be managed on behalf of the
4 residents?

5 Larry.

6 MR. WILSON: Yeah.

7 MR. NELSON: Okay.

8 MR. WILSON: Let's see if I can hold
9 this different so I don't whistle. All of this
10 project or virtually all of it is in the City of
11 Chicago. And as a result, it's subject to the
12 City of Chicago noise ordinances. And those
13 ordinances have to be followed or a waiver has
14 to be secured from the City of Chicago. Are
15 there going to be exceptions to that? I'm not
16 aware of any, but there could be. That's
17 something that we will -- we will find out more
18 about and we will talk about in subsequent
19 meetings.

20 MR. KNUTH: If I might follow up on
21 that.

22 Just like I was commenting on

1 the migration from dry piles and not doing that
2 kind of construction in the city where we are
3 near neighborhoods because of the damage. It's
4 also noisy. So we try to avoid some of that
5 kind of construction. That is more noisy than
6 other types.

7 We also tend to have rules
8 about when you can do the construction and
9 minimizing construction overnight. That's part
10 of what that city ordinance is --

11 MR. WILSON: Time of day.

12 MR. KNUTH: -- is time of day.

13 So we look at the type of
14 construction and the time of day as we are
15 looking at this job and developing solutions.

16 MR. NELSON: Okay. There's another
17 really good question here, and this might be for
18 our communications folks here.

19 During an environmental issue
20 that could occur during the project, how will
21 residents be notified of such issues? So I
22 believe this is -- you know, God forbid some

1 type of catastrophic event that affects the
2 environment in this construction area, how will
3 the residents be notified.

4 MR. WILSON: Well, I'll take a shot at
5 this, if there's not a railroad person that
6 wants to do it or is available.

7 The -- once we go -- I'm
8 assuming we're talking about construction here,
9 Carlos. Once a project is under construction,
10 most of the parts of this 75th Street CIP are
11 going to be railroad-led projects, either Metra
12 or other railroads. And the exception would be
13 the grade separation at 71st Street at the CSX.
14 And in these situations, the railroads are
15 required to follow -- each of them are a little
16 different, but they are required to follow their
17 own environmental protocols.

18 In the case that, for example,
19 there is some excavation and they hit some
20 hazardous materials or materials used on-site
21 that were dangerous, this is unlikely to happen.
22 But if some other incident happened during the

1 course of construction, they would be required
2 to notify the authorities the same way you would
3 if there was a train derailment or something
4 like that.

5 MR. KNUTH: I think a good example on
6 a very small scale was Gretchen at the start of
7 the meeting, well, just for a meeting like this.
8 We had a discussion about safety procedures, and
9 how we would evacuate, and where the exits are,
10 who would call 911.

11 On a major construction
12 project, there would be a very detailed
13 emergency action plan in place that the team is
14 required to follow and be knowledgeable about
15 and responsible for, and that includes emergency
16 contacts, public notification process and so on.
17 So that's become a very big part of all of our
18 work, that kind of safety, even down to just
19 holding a public meeting like this one.

20 MR. NELSON: Thank you. Thank you,
21 Doug and Larry. Okay. Another question.

22 And as I mentioned earlier, as

1 we continue to get answers for your great
2 questions, please continue to write questions
3 down. If you don't have a pen and post card,
4 raise your hand, if you need another one. I'm
5 certain some of these answers will trigger some
6 additional questions.

7 All right. And here's a
8 question that may require us to go back to one
9 of the diagrams. If train over train ramp is
10 built, at what location will it be?

11 MR. KNUTH: Well, one of the major
12 locations is at what's -- north/south tracks
13 cross the east/west tracks, we call it Forest
14 Hill and probably the easiest way to do this is
15 go back to a slide. Just a second.

16 Okay. It's going very slow.
17 Here we go. The location labeled Forest Hill is
18 one location where we clearly need to take one
19 set of tracks over another. Whether it's the
20 north/south tracks over the east/west tracks or
21 the opposite, we need to -- we need to separate
22 those two so that trains can keep moving, just

1 like a grade separation on a highway with a
2 bridge over. That's the major one. There could
3 also be one over at the east end.

4 Oh, there we go. So certainly
5 here. Possibly in this area, too, to eliminate
6 some conflicts, but this is -- this is certainly
7 one of the areas that we are looking for a new
8 railroad -- we call them fly overs or viaducts.
9 But that area is the primary area.

10 MR. NELSON: Thank you.

11 And just to orientate
12 everyone, that junction is approximately one
13 block north and one block west of here. So,
14 actually, when you leave this meeting, you can
15 see it. East, right. That direction. About
16 75th and Hamilton. Okay.

17 MR. KNUTH: It's a little hard to get
18 to because there's no street right there, but
19 it's where Bell -- 75th and Bell would be if
20 Bell went to 75th.

21 MR. NELSON: All right. Thank you.

22 We've got a few new questions

1 that have arisen.

2 MR. WILSON: That's good.

3 MR. NELSON: How long will
4 construction take if all goes as planned today?
5 You're asking engineers about a plan.

6 MR. WILSON: I can do that one. I've
7 got the answers for you, anyway.

8 Once the EIS is completed and
9 once the final designs are completed, the
10 project could be constructed, if all the money
11 was available, could be constructed in four to
12 five years. And it is -- it's very important
13 how the pieces of it are sequenced to allow the
14 railroads to keep operating and traffic to keep
15 moving while the improvements are made.

16 And we've done studies. We
17 have done studies to support that.

18 MR. NELSON: Okay. Got a couple of
19 hard questions here.

20 Reminds me of part of the
21 streetscape. Any CDOT? Anyone from Chicago
22 Department of Transportation here?

1 MR. SRIVER: Yeah.

2 MR. NELSON: All right. So CDOT can
3 relate to this question. The question is how
4 will current businesses in the designated
5 construction area be compensated when their
6 entrance is blocked due to construction traffic?

7 The only reason I turn to CDOT
8 is because of the wonderful streetscape projects
9 that we've had all over the city, thanks to
10 several aldermen in the area. And those
11 streetscape projects, as you know, when one part
12 of the street is under construction, CDOT has
13 really worked hard to make certain that the
14 entrances aren't impacted or impeded.

15 So I'm sure that's a question
16 that CDOT has had to deal with. But in this
17 case the question is, if any businesses in the
18 designated area for this 75th Street CIP are
19 affected, will those businesses be compensated
20 for their entrance being blocked?

21 MR. WILSON: Well, I think the best
22 answer to that is that we don't expect this to

1 happen very often on the project. We are
2 working every way we can to minimize this
3 happening. Most of the work on the project will
4 be taking place on railroad rights -- railroad
5 right-of-way.

6 Where streets are involved, we
7 have the 71st Street grade separation, but it's
8 not clear, depending on how all the alternates
9 work out and which one is selected, whether
10 there will be any appreciable impacts.

11 Now, there will be some places
12 where there might be temporary closures under a
13 viaduct or at the 71st Street crossing in order
14 to allow the bridge to be built and in those
15 circumstances a detailed detour plan has to be
16 worked out and signage has to be worked out.

17 But this -- I don't believe
18 there's going to be much of this, just based on
19 the nature of the project because it's not
20 street focused.

21 MR. NELSON: Great. Thanks for that
22 clarity.

1 Doug, you might have to stand
2 up and go back to your -- that slide. Maybe
3 not. So this is some clarity around Forest Hill
4 and Belt Junction.

5 Will the Forest Hill Junction
6 be at ground level and Belt Junction be raised?

7 MR. KNUTH: Well, Belt Junction is
8 raised and up on an embankment, you know.
9 Basically, what we want to do at Belt Junction
10 where we've got five tracks, narrows down to two
11 tracks, and then it goes back to four tracks, I
12 think, on the other side, is just eliminate that
13 narrowing and just make Belt Junction will, in
14 effect, go away, if we are successful. It won't
15 be there. There won't be a Belt Junction
16 anymore and the tracks will just be straight
17 through.

18 At Forest Hill some of the --
19 you know, either the east/west or the
20 north/south tracks will stay at grade where they
21 are today or very nearly so. One of the other
22 tracks will be elevated to go over those tracks.

1 Now either the two north/south tracks or the
2 four east/west tracks, there will probably be
3 more there in the future. So, there will be
4 tracks at grade there, but there will also be
5 tracks that are up in the air on the bridge.

6 MR. NELSON: Okay. Thank you again.

7 If any homes -- how's that for
8 a start to a question? If any homes surrounding
9 the project should need to be sacrificed, will
10 the homeowners receive market value or other
11 value and moving expenses?

12 Very good question. Anyone on
13 the team?

14 MR. KNUTH: It is a very important
15 question. We want the homeowners to be fully
16 compensated. In fact, it's a federal law,
17 Universal Relocation Act, that requires us to
18 offer full market value for the home, and we get
19 independent estimates of that value. Cover
20 moving expenses, cover relocation expenses, home
21 hunting costs and so on. We want the homeowner
22 to be made whole if we have to acquire a home.

1 The same thing is true for a
2 business. If we have to in the project acquire
3 business property, that business owner needs to
4 be made whole.

5 MR. NELSON: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. WILSON: That is a federal law,
7 and we are required to follow it on any project.

8 MR. KNUTH: And philosophically, it's
9 a big issue to have to move and, you know,
10 that's traumatic enough. There shouldn't be
11 anymore to it than that. That's -- you know,
12 you should get full compensation at least.

13 MR. NELSON: So, obviously, IDOT,
14 Jacobs Engineering, the project team, they are
15 very cognizant of if the need arises that
16 residents should be made whole and, in fact,
17 Larry just stated that it's a federal law.

18 MR. WILSON: Right.

19 MR. NELSON: All right.

20 During the presentation there
21 was mention from community residents regarding
22 the issue of rodents on our -- on some of the --

1 around some of the railroad right-of-ways. So
2 here's a question about that issue.

3 How will rodent
4 displacement -- that means they belong there.
5 We are moving them. How will rodent
6 displacement be managed during the construction
7 phase?

8 MR. KNUTH: That's actually a very
9 good question, and actually, it's something
10 we've talked about. When you start
11 construction, we do find that we end up with
12 rodents on the move, and so we've learned that
13 one of the things we need to do is create a
14 rodent control contract as part of the project
15 to come in and take care of rodent population at
16 the start of construction.

17 That's -- you know, my boss
18 has made that abundantly clear to me that that's
19 something that we need to do and it's also, you
20 know, an opportunity for a local firm to
21 participate in the contract.

22 And that's one of the things

1 we will also be looking for is opportunities for
2 local businesses to get contracts by finding
3 things that, you know, besides the great big
4 construction contracts, other things that need
5 to be done in order to make this project really
6 successful that local businesses can do.

7 MR. NELSON: More questions, please.
8 I still have some questions in my hands. Some
9 of these answers should be triggering some
10 additional thought processes. So if you need
11 another card, please raise your hand and please
12 keep writing.

13 I know that State Senator
14 Jacqueline Collins, 16th Senatorial District,
15 has successfully opened a couple of new Metra
16 stations right here in the area. It was a very
17 nice dedication. There is one at 79th and
18 Kedzie, right to the west, one mile from here,
19 and one at 83rd and Southwest Highway.

20 The question is -- now, both
21 of those are new. How will this program affect
22 those stations and how the train service will

1 affect -- will affect them services, the
2 community or this project affecting the Metra
3 serving this community?

4 Is Metra here? Anyone from
5 Metra?

6 MR. WILSON: Well, I will speak for
7 Metra.

8 MS. COHN: We're here.

9 MR. WILSON: I will talk, and then if
10 I'm wrong, then they will grab the mic and
11 they'll correct. But both of those -- both of
12 those are on the southwest service, right?

13 MR. NELSON: Right.

14 MR. WETTSTEIN: Yes, sir.

15 MR. WILSON: If you would rather
16 answer, please.

17 But I mean I think our --
18 well, I will just say that for this project when
19 we eliminate these congestion points, what that
20 means is less delays and more reliable service
21 along the southwest service line. And do we
22 have any construction impacts to stations that

1 you're aware of?

2 MR. KNUTH: Well, the only impact is
3 that Wrightwood station, right now it's just a
4 single track at Wrightwood station, and we would
5 like to -- that's one of the areas we would want
6 a double track. So we would have two tracks at
7 Wrightwood so the trains can stop in both
8 directions.

9 That area of single track is
10 one of the things that restricts Metra's
11 flexibility in scheduling trains. And putting
12 double track through there will allow Metra to
13 improve the service by scheduling more
14 flexibility in scheduling trains because they
15 don't have to schedule them around that single
16 track section where you can't -- obviously, you
17 can't have trains going both directions at the
18 same time. So that's a benefit there. So we
19 don't see any negative impact. We see benefits
20 at Wrightwood station and for the service as a
21 whole.

22 MR. WETTSTEIN: Correct me if I'm

1 wrong, Doug, but there might be some slight
2 track work also in the vicinity of the Ashburn
3 station, correct?

4 MR. KNUTH: Correct.

5 MR. WETTSTEIN: It's near but not
6 heavily impacting Ashburn. What Doug said about
7 Wrightwood is absolutely correct.

8 As for the other two stations
9 mentioned, as well as the entire southwest
10 service, what is a benefit to Metra and our
11 ridership is that this project and the southwest
12 service benefits with much more flexibility,
13 much more ability to flow at a better rate and
14 get people to their downtown destinations
15 quicker. Okay.

16 After this project has been
17 completed, without a doubt there will be an
18 improvement in the destination duration of
19 travel time.

20 With this also being done,
21 there is -- there is discussions of possible
22 additional trains on that service line.

1 MR. KNUTH: Thanks. That's Bill
2 Wettstein from Metra.

3 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Bill.

4 And I'm going to stand over
5 here so that I'm not too far away from Bill and
6 Tanya with Metra.

7 So this question -- I mean,
8 obviously, we are in an area here where we have
9 a lot of Metra riders; all right.

10 And so back to the southwest
11 service. Why are we going to inconvenience
12 thousands of southwest service riders who have
13 planned their work, their education or other
14 life needs around the current arrival at Union
15 Station? And then, basically, people are
16 against changes to the southwest service.

17 That's a statement, but there
18 is a question. Why are we going to
19 inconvenience thousands of -- it sounds like you
20 addressed it. You might want to -- it's
21 different. Okay.

22

1 MR. KNUTH: This is a different
2 question.

3 MR. WETTSTEIN: After saying a few
4 words, perhaps, either Larry or Doug would like
5 to elaborate.

6 But what -- some of the needs
7 for the region actually are fit into the -- some
8 of the proposals, some of the alternatives that
9 are anticipated for this project.

10 One of the aims, one of the
11 goals is to, as the question or comment
12 suggests, take southwest service ridership and
13 terminate it at the end of our Rock Island
14 District, which is the LaSalle Street station.
15 And if that happens, then the southwest service
16 will no longer terminate downtown at Union
17 Station.

18 I realize that for some -- I
19 ride the BN myself. I get off at Union Station.
20 Metra's headquarters is right across the street.
21 If I had to go to LaSalle Street, I would have
22 to walk further. So I understand the question.

1 As for the reason, the present
2 condition is that Union Station, particularly,
3 the south concourse is chocked full. We have
4 very little flexibility, and with the southwest
5 service, the Heritage Corridor, and all the BN
6 trains, it leaves very little, if any, ability
7 or capacity for additional traffic into that
8 south concourse.

9 If the southwest service was
10 to move to LaSalle Street, where we do have
11 excess capacity, it would be a plus, plus as far
12 as overall flexibility and improvements to our
13 total ridership.

14 So is it a minus for some?
15 Possibly. Is it a plus for everybody? If you
16 look at it holistically, I think you can say
17 that that's a fair statement.

18 MR. WILSON: Thanks, Bill. Let me add
19 a few things about this.

20 Bill is correct that part of
21 the plan for this project includes the
22 possibility of rerouting southwest service to

1 LaSalle Street station, and there is no doubt
2 that for some riders that's going to be a longer
3 walk and more of a hardship. For other riders
4 it may end up being closer to where they --
5 their ultimate destination downtown. But that
6 station crowding issue is not the only reason
7 for doing this.

8 If you ride the southwest
9 service, you know that the delays don't end --
10 where is that pointer? You got the pointer.
11 Push on the end of it?

12 MR. KNUTH: There's a button on the
13 side.

14 MR. WILSON: Sorry, folks. Didn't
15 learn this technology yet. Oh, sorry about
16 that. I'm blind in one eye.

17 All right. What we have
18 already said here is we are going to
19 eliminate -- and I said this to some of the
20 folks in the room.

21 We eliminate a delay for the
22 southwest service here by adding a second track.

1 We eliminate a delay here by separating tracks,
2 hopefully. We eliminate ability here by getting
3 rid of Belt Junction. But the delays don't stop
4 there, do they, southwest service riders?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, they do
6 not.

7 MR. WILSON: Right now that southwest
8 train goes up here and then it runs into massive
9 freight train interference right around
10 Pershing. And so you get stopped by freight
11 trains up there, too.

12 And then the whole 21st Street
13 area where all the Amtrak activity is and other
14 trains are coming in get held up there as well.

15 By using the Rock Island, the
16 Rock Island has no -- there are no delay points
17 whatever along. It's just a straight shot
18 downtown. So it further improves the
19 reliability by getting it off of that track
20 where it runs into more freight train
21 interference near Pershing and in the yards
22 there starting about 47th Street. So that's

1 another factor in doing this. And it's also a
2 lynchpin in doing some other things in the
3 region.

4 But with -- like a lot of
5 other projects, it makes some people's lives a
6 little more difficult and others easier. But
7 it's unquestionable that doing this is going to
8 give us a more reliable service so that people
9 can count on getting downtown when the train
10 schedule says that it's going to get downtown.
11 Anything I've left out, Doug?

12 MR. KNUTH: No.

13 MR. WETTSTEIN: One very short point.
14 It was so short I could say it in about ten
15 seconds.

16 The only possible delay
17 between where we would cross from the present
18 southwest service to the Rock Island would be
19 the newest station on Metra's system, which is
20 at 35th Street; okay.

21 If the Sox should win another
22 championship, then there might be -- there might

1 be a lot of people on the Rock Island, fans
2 getting off the train.

3 MR. NELSON: All right. Thank you.

4 There's a question. Will
5 pedestrian and bicycle access be included in the
6 project? I love that question.

7 MR. KNUTH: Well, we certainly heard
8 that a lot of the existing viaducts, the
9 underpasses, that the -- they're a real problem
10 for pedestrians. They are dark. There is water
11 on the sidewalks and because it sits there it's
12 muddy and it's generally unsafe and unpleasant
13 for pedestrians. And those really restrict
14 communities' ability to get around those areas
15 where the community is bordered by the railroads
16 and these viaducts.

17 We have taken a look at those.
18 We agree. We've got some lighting problems.
19 We've got some drainage problems, and we are
20 working to address those in the project.

21 MR. WILSON: Let me add to that.

22 In terms of bicycles, we -- I

1 don't know if we have looked -- gotten to the
2 point in the project yet where we looked at
3 existing bicycle routes through the city. Have
4 we?

5 MR. KNUTH: Yes.

6 MR. WILSON: Okay.

7 MR. KNUTH: There are a limited number
8 of bike routes in this core part of the city.

9 MR. WILSON: As Doug said, there are a
10 limited number of bike routes in this part of
11 the city, and I think it's safe to say that
12 whenever there is a bike route on a viaduct that
13 we are working on that we would -- we would be
14 mindful of that and maintain its viability or,
15 hopefully, enhance its viability because of
16 fixing the viaduct problems that are impeding
17 pedestrians and bicycle users.

18 And the last thing I'll say is
19 that there is a new act called The Complete
20 Streets Act, which the legislature passed and
21 which IDOT is in the process of implementing,
22 that set some standards for how pedestrians and

1 bicycle treatment should be done when we are
2 doing roadway projects. And we will, on any
3 project that's done under IDOT's jurisdiction,
4 we will endeavor to follow the guidance that's
5 been given to us in support of that new act.

6 MR. KNUTH: On the bicycle lane, I
7 neglected to address this.

8 The other thing we will be
9 doing is coordinating with the City, as far as
10 their overall bike route planning, to see if
11 there is any proposed routes through this area
12 that we need to take into account as we're doing
13 our work.

14 The city is very aggressive on
15 bike routes, and I have some employees that work
16 for me who are also very aggressive on bike
17 routes and that they won't let me forget it
18 either.

19 MR. NELSON: All right. Several --
20 more than several questions around this issue.
21 I think it was shown in the presentation, I
22 think for clarity, because this is such a

1 crucial issue. So let's go back to the issue of
2 taking homes.

3 Are there any anticipated
4 areas of homeowner's displacement? Where? If
5 so, when will the homeowner be notified if their
6 home is in the line of sight of the project?
7 And then at what price would they be
8 compensated? Will it be -- for you finance
9 guys -- will it be at today's market or for what
10 they paid for the home?

11 Let me revisit that question.
12 There's a lot of questions in that one soliloquy
13 there.

14 Are there any anticipated
15 areas where homeowners will be displaced and
16 where? If so, when will the homeowners be
17 notified that their home is in the line of sight
18 of the project and will be up for displacement?
19 And also, at what price will they be
20 compensated? Today's market or at the price at
21 which they bought their home?

22 Here we go. I was looking

1 around. I was waiting on an expert.

2 MR. KNUTH: And everyone pointed to
3 me.

4 Okay. As we just talked
5 about, the need to -- this one is fading and I
6 don't see it.

7 Right around Hamilton Park.
8 There it is. Okay.

9 As we connect that southwest
10 service to the Rock Island service, at some
11 point we will have to build a new connection,
12 and the area where they are closest is the area
13 around Hamilton Park, and we will look at a
14 number of alternative routes through that area.

15 All of those routes would
16 involve taking some homes, some residential
17 properties. Some of them are vacant properties
18 but some of them have residences on them.

19 We will be looking at those
20 alternatives this summer. We will be meeting
21 with community members this summer. Next month
22 is our plan to be back out with community

1 advisory groups. Gretchen kind of --
2 (inaudible) -- which is however you need to
3 start all over again and be back out next month.
4 But she know she's going to be very busy.

5 But we need to be back out
6 talking to the community about the possible
7 locations for that connection and what the
8 impacts are.

9 One of the big things we are
10 trying to accomplish there is, you know, have
11 the absolute minimum number of impacts we can;
12 both to residences in the community and Hamilton
13 Park. Hamilton Park is a pretty significant
14 resource in the City of Chicago. It's a very
15 famous part of the Chicago Park District.

16 As far as the value, that is
17 kind of a tough question right now. Normally,
18 in doing these things home prices are
19 continually rising and so, generally, when you
20 are acquiring homes as part of a project, we
21 don't find that home prices have fallen. That's
22 not the case right now, and that's something we

1 will have to evaluate when we get closer.

2 We will know by -- you know,
3 this fall we'll be looking at those
4 alternatives. We are planning hopefully on
5 coming back this fall to a public meeting with a
6 preferred alternative for that location, which
7 people will know which homes could be impacted.

8 The actual acquisition would
9 probably still be a couple years away at
10 soonest. Hopefully, home prices will rise in
11 the meantime as the economy improves but we
12 can't say what's happening there.

13 But, you know, we'll have to
14 work through that issue of declining home prices
15 at the time that comes.

16 MR. WILSON: Let me just add to what
17 Doug said by saying that we have to look at what
18 flexibility the Act might allow us, the Federal
19 Uniform Act might allow us to do that. We have
20 to act within the provisions of that Act, and I
21 can't tell you. I don't know personally whether
22 any provisions have been made for these

1 situations. That's something that we will find
2 out.

3 MR. KNUTH: One more comment there.

4 As we look at homes in any
5 area where we will be taking, we will be looking
6 at a whole range of alternatives to offer
7 homeowners.

8 The City owns lots in these
9 areas. So if someone wants to stay in the area,
10 part of the package could be one of the lots
11 that the City owns that's not in the path of the
12 railroad. We've even talked about if someone
13 just wants -- if someone who's spent a lot of
14 money fixing up their house who wants to stay in
15 the neighborhood, maybe we could, you know,
16 arrange to move their house to one of those
17 nearby lots.

18 So we -- you know, we want to
19 allow people to stay in the neighborhood. We
20 want to -- we want to accommodate the community,
21 and then we will look for every opportunity to
22 find ways to do as good a job there as we can.

1 MR. NELSON: All right. That's a
2 tough subject, and I know it's a subject that
3 will -- it's going to have a recurring theme.

4 Gretchen mentioned that on
5 Thursday of this week, same exact time, there
6 will be a public meeting for the eastern section
7 over at First Corinthian Missionary Baptist
8 Church on 75th and Halsted.

9 We're going to do a time
10 check. It's 7:20. I think we are supposed to
11 be out of here in about ten minutes.

12 So we are going to have --
13 I've got one more question. I do have another
14 question about Belt Junction. I'm not sure who
15 has -- not Bell. Forest Junction.

16 Once again, little more
17 clarity. At Forest Hill Junction will railway
18 be raised? That's a quick question.

19 MR. WILSON: In any environmental
20 process there's one option that says do nothing.
21 In this case, we don't expect to do nothing
22 because the existing situation delays the train,

1 creates a lot of noise for the residents, and it
2 creates other problems. So it's highly likely
3 that either the north/south tracks will go over
4 the east/west tracks or the east/west tracks
5 will go over the north/south tracks. Logic
6 tells us that there are five tracks east and
7 west. There are two tracks north and south.

8 So part of our alternatives
9 analysis or alternates analysis that we will
10 have -- we will be discussing at our next
11 meeting -- public meetings with you will be
12 about those alternatives, and we will lay out
13 the invocations of each of them and then get
14 your input about which you think would be more
15 beneficial.

16 MR. NELSON: Okay. And one last
17 question.

18 I really want to thank Metra
19 guys for being here, and you guys don't know me.
20 I have been working with -- working with Metra
21 for at least five years on a project that
22 involves some heavy duty lifting and the

1 southwest service jumping over to the Rock
2 Island line is a part of that. I've been a Rock
3 Island line rider for a long time. From 87th,
4 the Gresham station, to the LaSalle Street
5 station, it was 20 minutes. At the most 20
6 minutes. I mean that was obviously before 35th
7 Street.

8 But I'm here to tell you for
9 you southwest service riders, once you are over
10 on the Rock Island line, if that happens or when
11 it happens, it will be a world of difference for
12 you.

13 I don't even like Metra. I'm
14 just telling you that. Sorry. I do have time.

15 All right. Last question.
16 These homes that are affected by the noise of
17 the trains behind these homes, will they be
18 getting sound barrier walls?

19 MR. KNUTH: Part of the environmental
20 analysis that we are required to do is the noise
21 analysis. We went out in the field and we
22 measured existing noise levels from trains. We

1 measured background noise levels. We built a
2 pretty extensive noise model to analyze train
3 noise to match the existing -- from the existing
4 train patterns and then looked at proposed train
5 patterns and looked at the proposed noise
6 levels.

7 We are -- we have to address
8 increases in train level and that could involve
9 some sound barriers. We will look at those and
10 evaluate those throughout the project. We'll
11 come back probably next year, early next year
12 with the results of that analysis and show you
13 where we saw significant increases in train
14 noise and what we are doing about it. So
15 it's -- you go and be completely open about what
16 we see there.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Let me ask you
18 a question, Doug. Where did you go to make that
19 check?

20 MR. KNUTH: We did it -- we did it
21 five years ago, and we came back out and did it
22 last year.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Last year.
2 Okay. Where? Well, what location?

3 MR. KNUTH: There were -- Joe. Is Joe
4 still here? Do you remember how many noise
5 monitoring locations we had?

6 JOE: I believe the number was 19.

7 MR. KNUTH: I was going to say about
8 20 different locations throughout the project
9 area.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. We're
11 exactly 30 feet from the train tracks, 30 feet
12 from the train track. There's a track here.
13 (Indicating.) So you need to come to my house.

14 MR. KNUTH: I understand. I
15 understand. Absolutely at night.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have one on
17 68th and Hamilton, the sound whatever.

18 MR. KNUTH: Well, we went out -- it's
19 a little portable device. We have pictures we
20 can show you.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- (inaudible)
22 -- but we haven't seen them either.

1 MR. KNUTH: So we will come back with
2 that, and we will show you. Well, it's
3 basically contour maps that show the noise
4 levels at various distances from the railroad.

5 MR. WILSON: It's impossible to
6 measure directly every area. So what happens is
7 the noise experts use the areas they've got and
8 they model what's going on in between. But
9 that's only half the story.

10 The other half of the story is
11 the noise modelers know every train that's
12 coming by, and when it's coming by, and how long
13 it's going to be in front of any particular
14 location. All that information is put together
15 into that analysis.

16 And there's one more thing
17 that's actually relatively new and that is that
18 once we have identified that a noise barrier is
19 needed, and it meets all the criteria that are
20 in the procedures that follow the federal and
21 the state rules on this, then the community gets
22 to vote as to whether they want it or not. And

1 that's not always, you know, an open and shut
2 decision. Sometimes it is. But those rules are
3 rules that we are working on right now.

4 The Federal Government wants
5 more community involvement. It used to be that
6 if your community -- let's say you lived in the
7 west suburb. If they didn't want the wall, it
8 didn't get built. Now they are giving the
9 citizens a voice as well. So that's all I
10 wanted to add.

11 MR. NELSON: Okay. So I want to say
12 thank you. I'm going to have Jakita close us
13 out. We have about three minutes to do that.

14 Once again, I will mention
15 Thursday at First Corinthian Baptist Church,
16 which is 7500 South Halsted. It's an
17 opportunity for you to -- if you have additional
18 questions, if you think of something else,
19 another intimate setting.

20 I would like to thank Alderman
21 Lona Lane in the 18th Ward, Alderman Thomas in
22 the 17th Ward, Alderman Howard Brookins in the

1 21st Ward. They've been very much involved in
2 this project. Hopefully, I will see you
3 Thursday and certainly in the fall for the
4 second public meeting.

5 And here is Jakita.

6 MS. TROTTER: Thank you, Carlos.

7 Well, he said it all.

8 You have a question?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, what
10 time? Same time?

11 MS. TROTTER: Same time. 4:00 to
12 7:30, yes, on Thursday.

13 Thank you again, everyone, for
14 joining us.

15 MR. WILSON: I thought of one more
16 thing I wanted to say and then I will let her
17 finish.

18 No. That's all right.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just say bye.

20 MR. WILSON: Some people told me you
21 didn't get a mailing about this meeting. If you
22 didn't get a mailing about this meeting but you

1 heard about it from a neighbor or whatever, make
2 sure you signed in at the front desk. Because
3 once you've signed in at one of these meetings,
4 you're going to get everything. You won't be
5 missed again; okay. There you go.

6 MS. TROTTER: Thank you and have a
7 good night.

8
9 (WHICH WERE ALL THE PROCEEDINGS HAD
10 IN THE ABOVE-ENTITLED MATTER.)
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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
)
2 COUNTY OF C O O K)

3
4
5 I, DONNA T. WADLINGTON, a
6 Certified Shorthand Reporter, doing business in
7 the County of Cook and State of Illinois, do
8 hereby certify that I reported in machine
9 shorthand the proceedings in the above entitled
10 cause.

11 I further certify that the
12 foregoing is a true and correct transcript of
13 said proceedings as appears from the
14 stenographic notes so taken and transcribed by
15 me this 16th day of December, 2011.

16
17
18 _____
19 DONNA T. WADLINGTON
20 CSR #084-02443
21
22

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