

## (September 16, 2008) Suburban Life: Lipinski said hearings unfairly represent opponents of rail sale

By Joe Sinopoli

Western Springs, IL -

U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-3rd District, of Western Springs, said earlier this summer he wanted to study the proposed purchase of the EJ&E Railroad by Canadian National to determine whether it would alleviate traffic jams in areas where trains have routinely blocked crossings, idled overnight near homes and sounded whistles.

If approved, many Cook County suburbs could experience a reduction or elimination of CN train traffic on certain lines. Meanwhile, some northeast and western suburbs have tried to kill the deal to avoid absorbing some of the rail traffic Lipinski's constituents would be relieved from.

Last month, Lipinski joined village presidents Richard Scheck from North Riverside, Jack Wiaduck from Riverside, and other local officials to announce their support for the sale.

On Sept. 9, Lipinski took his case to the body that holds sway over the deal, the Surface Transportation Board, where he emphasized that more than 60 communities will benefit from the transaction. But more importantly, Lipinski took the board to task for not conducting hearings on the acquisition evenly throughout the affected area because hearings were not conducted in many of those communities that would benefit most from the deal.

"While I commend the STB for holding a series of public meetings in Chicagoland, I do want to express my strong concern that the attention and focus has been on the communities along the EJ&E while communities in Chicago and the inner suburbs, such as those in my district, have largely been left on the sidelines," Lipinski stated.

The congressman said Monday he was concerned not all the voices were heard that needed to be.

Lipinski said he also was concerned that many constituents are unaware of the benefit the sale will have to their local communities. Lipinski related the reaction from a crowd in La Grange Park last month when he announced his support for the sale. Half the crowd booed, he said.

"Not one person in my district will see more trains, but they don't understand that because the broadcast media has only handled one angle of it," he said.