

## *What is this about?*

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe's "Monticello Subdivision" is a dead-end line with little freight traffic. The Canadian Pacific's "Paynesville Subdivision" is a heavily-used freight line with dozens of trains per day, some 1-2 miles long, and some carrying highly volatile Bakken oil. These two lines cross in Crystal, the BNSF running roughly north-south and the CP running roughly east-west.

BNSF is proposing to purchase and demolish all or parts of the business properties at 5140, 5160 and 5170 West Broadway and build a track that would connect the CP to the BNSF.

BNSF has said that the primary purpose would be to reduce congestion in its Northtown Yard by diverting eastbound CP freight trains down the BNSF through Robbinsdale and Golden Valley into Minneapolis.

*So why is this a big deal for Crystal?*

Shifting CP mainline traffic onto the BNSF would put a volume and type of freight on this line that it has never seen. Going from a handful of short trains per week to a dozen (or more) 1-2 mile long freight trains per day, some carrying highly volatile Bakken oil, would be a radical change on the BNSF.

*Don't CP trains already block Douglas Drive & West Broadway? So what if some of them turn south and head down the BNSF line through Robbinsdale and Golden Valley?*

Crystal has been able to live with delays at the CP crossings because we've always had the Corvallis escape route across the BNSF to the Bottineau Blvd overpass. With those trains turning south onto the BNSF, we won't have that option.

*Okay, that's bad, but wouldn't the railroads just be responding to freight demand?*

Perhaps, but railroads don't exist in a vacuum. Freight movement is important, but public safety and quality of life are also important. The railroads seem to be avoiding consideration of these important factors.

*Aren't the railroads just trying to relieve congestion elsewhere in the metro area?*

BNSF says that this is just to relieve existing rail congestion but they also said they plan to have no restrictions on the volume or type of freight CP can put on the BNSF line. So once the connection is built, CP could increase overall traffic on their line through the Twin Cities. Rail congestion could be just as bad in a few years if CP decides to push even more freight through the metro area.

*Would CP really do that?*

We don't know, but they could. CP has refused the city's requests for information and they aren't saying anything about their long term plans. But once the connector is built, they may put as much freight on the BNSF line as they want, and claim that it is their right to do so regardless of how it impacts local communities.

*Wouldn't CP be limited by the capacity of the BNSF line through Robbinsdale and Golden Valley?*

BNSF has said that they want to be able to have room to add a second freight track to this line. CP could also add a second track to their line through Plymouth and New Hope into Crystal, then turn south onto a double-track BNSF line through Robbinsdale and Golden Valley. Once the connector is built, it is likely that they could make these changes without any sort of meaningful environmental review.

## *Are there alternatives?*

Yes, at least two, and possibly more:

- BNSF says the problem is congestion in the Northtown Yard on the east side of the Mississippi. It would seem logical that they look at making improvements there - on land already owned by the railroads.
- CP already has a connection to another BNSF line in a rural area about 10 miles from the North Dakota border. That BNSF line connects to the same line through Minneapolis that bypasses the Northtown Yard. Reconfiguring that existing connection - on land already owned by the railroads - would get their trains to the same place as the Crystal connection.
- Perhaps it is time to consider a freight rail bypass around the Twin Cities instead of pushing even more freight traffic - including highly volatile Bakken oil - through the metro area on its way to somewhere else.

All of this adds up to the need for an Environmental Impact Statement to fully understand the **impacts** of the project, consider the **alternatives**, and evaluate possible **mitigation** measures.