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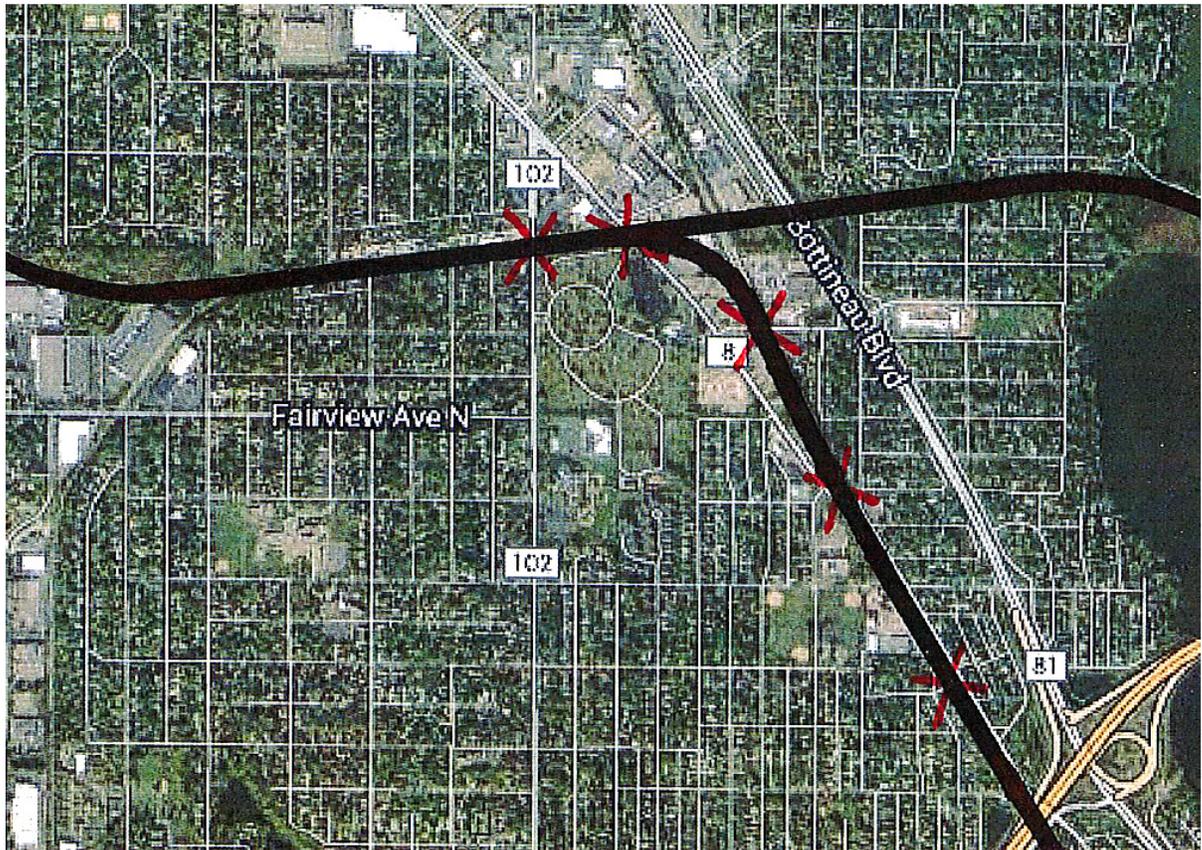
PROPOSED RAIL CONNECTION IN CRYSTAL

1. The Connection and Local Impacts

- a. Crystal city staff has learned from affected property owners that the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Canadian Pacific (CP) railroads are proposing to construct a connector track in the southwest quadrant of their “diamond” crossing in Crystal. This aerial image shows the general vicinity of the proposed connection.



- b. Crystal staff does not know the precise alignment of the connector track because the railroads, despite repeated requests, have not provided any substantive information, have denied having any plans or drawings, and have not met with the city.
- c. The connection will bring a significant increase in the length and frequency of heavy freight trains on the BNSF track in Crystal and extending through Robbinsdale and Golden Valley into Minneapolis. These heavy freights also include Bakken oil trains.
- d. Currently, only one or two trains/day operates on the BNSF track, and they are much shorter than those running on the CP. Several dozen heavy freight trains run on the CP each day, each approximately 4,000 feet in length (100± cars).
- e. A single 4,000' heavy freight diverted from the east-west CP track to the north-south BNSF track would simultaneously close all four of the Crystal crossings: Douglas Drive (CR 102), West Broadway (CR 8), Corvallis and again at West Broadway.
- f. Trains of up to 5,600 feet have been observed on the CP. If these are diverted to the BNSF, then the 45½ Avenue crossing in Robbinsdale also would be closed simultaneously with Crystal's four crossings; meaning that all crossings between Winnetka Avenue in New Hope and Highway 100 in Robbinsdale, a track distance of 2¼ miles through a fully developed urban area, would be closed by a single train, as indicated by the image on the next page.



- g. The simultaneous closing of these grade crossings will significantly impede access for residents and businesses, and most importantly, extend emergency vehicle response times on calls to the north and east one-third of the city, including its major commercial and business activity center. Significant increases in noise and vibration are anticipated, as well.

2. The Permitting Process

- a. The City's legal counsel have advised that the proposed rail connection is not subject to any local, county or state permitting or review processes.
- b. MnDOT staff indicated their role is to simply assess grade crossing safety.
- c. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Surface Transportation Board (STB) is responsible for issuing a certificate of authorization for such a connection and directs any environmental review process.
- d. If an Environmental Impact Statement is required, that process includes a public comment period to provide for community and citizen input on this project.

3. MnDOT Rail Crossing and Safety Study

- a. MnDOT's grade crossing safety study completed in December 2014 did not consider this proposed connector track or its impacts when recommending improvements at rail crossings, including grade separations.

4. Appropriations Bill

- a. The MnDOT study will be used by legislators to consider rail safety projects in a potential bonding bill. Legislators must have an opportunity to consider grade separation projects in Crystal that will protect vital community needs and services.