



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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MEMO

July 19, 2018

To: Board of Public Works

From: Katie Jelacic, P.E.

Subject: RR Crossings through the City of Waukesha.

A referral was made by Alderman Skinner to the Board of Public works on June 7, 2018, about RR crossings in the City. The Alderman's concern is:

"When trains pass through Waukesha and break down or encounter other delays and problems, there is a broad and varying impact on the community. For example, traffic back-ups, emergency route congestion, traffic passing through neighborhoods that are not meant to handle that level of traffic and type, as well as emergency routes becoming blocked. This impact is both in time as well as cost."

The BPW directed Staff to prepare a report to address this referral.

Overview:

The first train ran from Milwaukee to Waukesha in 1851. The first road was platted in Prairieville in 1848. Trains have always been a large part of Waukesha's history, with most crossings being here before the streets were constructed. At many of the crossings in the City, it is unclear who was there first. There are 2 main RR companies still active in Waukesha. The Canadian National, Wisconsin Central Railway Division (CN/WCL) and the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad (WSOR).

The CN purchased the Wisconsin Central Railways in 2001. This key corridor operates from Chicago to Superior Wisconsin. This segment through the City is referred to as the Waukesha Subdivision. Waukesha is on this main corridor and approximately 35-42 trains per day that pass through or switch in Waukesha. The average speed through the City is 35 mph. There are 15 at-grade crossings of the main line within the City Limits. Two of those crossings are pedestrian crossings only. There is one overpass located at W. Newhall Avenue. There is also a spur line that is rarely used that runs from West Ave across Progress Ave. and Prairie Ave.

The WSOR is divided into the Northern Division and the Southern Division. The WSOR has track rights over a short section of the CN/WCL from Waukesha to Slinger providing a link between the 2 divisions. They operate approximately 2 trains per day that switch in Waukesha to make this connection. The average speed through town is 25 mph. There are 5 at-grade

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crossings of the main line within the City Limits. They switch between the CN/WCL and the WSOR is located near the Grand Ave. crossing.

There are 21 At-Grade Crossings on the main lines of the CN/WCL and WSOR through the City as shown below.

USDOT Crossing ID Number	Street Name	ADT – 2018 City of Waukesha Count	No of Accidents	Accident Time Frame	Injury/Fatality
CN/WCL Mainline					
692218D	Moreland Blvd	21,800	9	1975-1988	3/0
692216P	Whiterock Ave.	7,940	7	1975-2017	4/0
689911J	College Ave	7,100	10	1975-2008	7/0
689912R	Maple Ave.	1,750	1	1990	0/0
689909H	West Ave	5,800	8	1977-2012	0/0
689913X	Grand Ave.	6,900	11	1976-2014	6/0
689915L	Barstow St.	2,900	11	1975-2011	5/0
689918G	East Ave.	8,500	13	1975-1998	6/0
689919N	Broadway	10,700	5	1975-1981	1/0
692211F	Arcadian St.	3,270	4	1976-2013	2/0
692212M	Hartwell Ave.	4,500	8	1975-2006	1/0
692213U	Main St.	7,300	14	1976-2000	5/0
689904Y	Sunset Drive	18,400	7	1976-1981	2/1
689916T	Carroll	Ped. Only			
689914E	Cutler	Ped. Only			

USDOT Crossing ID Number	Street Name	ADT – 2018 City of Waukesha Count	No of Accidents	Accident Time Frame	Injury/Fatality
WSOR Mainline					
	Grandview Blvd	6700	0	NA	NA
	MacArthur Blvd	2500	1	1984	1
	Prairie Ave.	11800	1	2006	No Injury
	Maple Ave.	1700	0	NA	NA
	West Ave	6400	1	1983	1
	Grand Ave	6900	11	1976-2014	6/0

Rights of the Railroad:

All the Rights of the Railroads are outlined in the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Cities do not have any rights over their operation. According to State and Federal law, it is unlawful to stop any railroad train, locomotive or car upon or across any highway or street crossing, outside of cities, or leave the same standing upon such crossing longer than 10 minutes, except in case of an accident. Even if a local community has an ordinance that contradicts the Federal Railroad Administration, the local law will be preempted and therefore will be unenforceable. The Railroad does not have to operate on any set schedule, and the FRA regulations preempt any state or local restrictions on train movements. The Railroad does not have to report any stoppage longer than 10 min, unless it is an accident. The accidents are summarized in the above tables.

Proposed Actions:

In 2006 the City, along with the DOT sent a letter to the CN/WCL requesting the relocation of the main switch yard for the CN/WCL, located near Main St, to a site outside of the City Limits. The 35-42 trains per day would still be moving through Waukesha but the trains would not have to stop and switch at the yard. The CN never responded to the request made by the City and DOT

The only way to eliminate traffic impacts to the City at the crossings is to grade separate the crossings. There are only 2 locations in the City that the geometry would allow for the separation. One is Moreland Blvd, which in 2004 the City entered a three-party contract with the DOT and an engineering consultant (Alfred Benesch) to study the feasibility of grade separating Moreland Blvd. and the Canadian National railroad track. A value Planning approach to the project was used to provide a systematic team approach to the feasibility study. The result of the study proved that it was not economically feasible to separate Moreland Blvd, at an approximate cost in 2004 of 15 million dollars and this solution would close Whiterock Ave. at the crossing. The other crossing would be West Ave, but there is already a separated crossing at Newhall Ave, which is less than a mile from the West Ave Crossing.

Conclusion:

The City has no authority to regulate the train traffic or question the RR operations through the City Limits. Waukesha is not the only community in the area that is impacted by train traffic. Brookfield and West Allis has considerable train traffic through their cities.