

Mayor's Comments 1/16/18

Lake Forest City Council has a long history of problem solving and decision-making utilizing a thorough process that includes public input and engagement. I would like to thank all who have offered their opinions and information to City Council over the past few months on West Lake Forest rail matters. By working together, we always make better decisions.

At all times, it is imperative the City Council's position on an Amtrak stop at Telegraph Road be clear to all, as well as matters affecting the Milwaukee District North Line, including a possible third track. Lest there be confusion in the community about these matters, I would like to state the following:

1. This City Council, (as with past City Councils), supports an Amtrak stop at the Telegraph Road Station. **Of utmost importance to Lake Forest is the impact the stop has on public safety.** This stop will slow and stop all Amtrak trains traversing our community thereby providing safety enhancement to this intersection. An additional benefit to adding a stop is that it will provide an important transportation service to many Lake Forest citizens, as well as large employers and small businesses within the area. This new stop will provide easy and efficient access for residents and employees traveling to and from Chicago and to ever-growing Milwaukee and SE Wisconsin business opportunities. The Council is pleased that after 8 years of pursuing such a stop that Amtrak, IDOT, Metra and WisDOT all have agreed to the City's long pursued request.
2. This City Council, (as with past City Councils), also supports the construction of a pedestrian underpass at the Telegraph Rd. Station. Once again, for the public health and safety of our residents, we need to see this project become a reality. Lake Forest has experienced far too many train related deaths over the years, and we need to take steps to make this station safer. In 2018, we will work hard to finalize the engineering and raise the necessary external funding to complete this project. We are working to secure federal funding and are pursuing other outside sources of funding to support this important community safety enhancement, that Amtrak also requires.
3. This City Council, (as with past City Councils), supports the general enhancement of commuter rail service within our community. Many residents rely on Metra service to get to and from work, visit Chicago and travel to other communities. The availability of convenient and timely commuter rail service is vital to Lake Forest's long-term well being.

These initiatives have been goals for the City since 2010 and have been part of the Lake Forest strategic plan. Obviously, for these goals to be achieved, the City has and will continue to work with Metra, Amtrak, IDOT and WisDOT. Let us not forget that Metra alone owns the Milwaukee District North line and must authorize any new stops, construction, or passenger service within their right-of-way.

Now – on an entirely separate matter, that has never been connected to the foregoing:

With regard to the Milwaukee District third track- this City Council **has not supported** the construction of a third track as proposed in the draft Environmental Assessment. Following the release of the draft Environmental Assessment in late 2016, the City Council **did** approve a resolution raising many questions, which prompted more analysis of potential noise and vibration impacts on surrounding properties. The Council **is** concerned about the impacts to our community and residents. **I do not believe that any member of this City Council believes a third track through our community enhances the quality of life.**

To that end, City representatives have met with Metra officials to persuade them to explore alternative steps to achieve their desired operational flexibility. This work and direction is evidenced in Metra's recent TIGER Grant application, **which does not include a funding request for a third track.**

As frustrating as it may be for some, City officials and residents must wait until the final Environmental Assessment is released to decide the City Council's next course of action. These actions could include engaging outside consultants, but that cannot happen until the report is released and we know the conditions, and a reasonable course of action is decided upon. We anticipate the report to be released in the next few months. Be assured, this City Council will share the report and hold a public meeting to discuss it and the defined recommendations. Only with the specific data of the EA in hand – can we explore the best next steps.

Once again, I thank our residents for their interest and patience in working through this complex issue. To make this community effort successful **we must work together patiently to be effective.** By following our long-standing tradition of thoughtful problem solving and community collaboration, I am confident we will reach the best solution. This tradition has served Lake Forest well for many decades and will continue to be a hallmark of Lake Forest City Government.