

Date: [July 20, 2017](#)

Subject: Prevent The Illinois Prairie Path Closure

### **Trail Users, Environmental Advocates, and Friends**

I am writing [today](#) to seek your help in stopping a disaster before it starts. The County of DuPage is planning to permanently close a section of the Illinois Prairie Path (IPP) and detour trail users through a very, very dangerous eight-lane intersection. Trail users need your help to stop this atrocity!

I'm Bob Sobie and it is important to know that I am no longer the President nor a Board Member of the Illinois Prairie Path Not-For-Profit Corporation. I do not speak with the authority of any organized group. I am now citizen Bob, concerned about the safety of all trail users and the integrity of the Illinois Prairie Path that I love so much, where someday my ashes will rest for eternity.

The County of DuPage is planning to permanently close 1.6 miles of the Aurora Branch of the Illinois Prairie Path. The permanent closure would be from I88 to Eola Road in Naperville/Aurora. The detour will take trail users on the Batavia Spur of the IPP, along the very busy Eola Road, over the scary I88 bridge, and through an extremely dangerous eight-lane intersection at Diehl Rd.

Last year when I first learned of this proposed permanent rerouting of the IPP, I was part of a small group that met with DuPage County officials to speak truth to power. Unfortunately, my/our argument fell on deaf ears; individual reasoning did not work. It is now time for action at a larger level!

The County is holding a hearing on this atrocity and I believe it is time to flood said meeting with as many trail users as possible to speak about safety and the importance of trails in our society! I attached to this email a flier announcing the meeting that will be held on [August 3<sup>rd</sup>](#). Please, Please, Please ask your membership to attend the meeting. Pass along all or part of this email to your members (please leave off my email address). Get the word out that we must stop this proposal.

### **Here is the issue from the point of view of this trail user/lover**

On [June 3](#) 2016 a letter (attached) appeared in the Naperville [Sun](#) Newspaper explaining that the closure of the IPP is due to trail users having to wait an excessively long time while freight trains cross the IPP along the CN railroad tracks just east of Eola Road. CN Freight trains have been allowed by the Illinois Commerce Commission to be one mile long.

To correct this inconvenience the County will permanently close the Illinois Prairie Path Aurora Spur between Eola Road and I88. They will detour trail users along the Batavia Spur of the IPP, over the exact same problem causing CN Railroad tracks at grade, then immediately alongside the four lane Eola Road busy highway, over the frightening I88 bridge (which the County will have to widen), and directly through the Eola Rd – Diehl Rd eight lane intersection. In my opinion this will be costly (widening Eola Road over the tollway), dangerous (crossing through an eight-lane intersection), ugly (now we will be forced along the four lane Eola Road), and useless (crossing the same railroad tracks at grade only 2/10 of a mile north).

This plan has to be stopped!

### **Two solution(s) to the problem.**

#1 Chicago, Aurora, Elgin Railroad used to cross what is now the CN Railroad below grade. In other words, a tunnel under the CN tracks. The Illinois Prairie Path exists on the old CA&E right-of-way. Several years ago the lead Civil Engineer for the County of DuPage talked to me (back when I was the President of the Illinois Prairie Path Not-For-Profit Corporation) about a plan to resurrect the old tunnel under the CN railroad. It turns out that when the railroad was abandoned this tunnel was just filled in with dirt and clean fill, the tunnel still exists!. He was working with NICOR Gas to open this existing tunnel under the CN Railroad tracks for both a new pipeline and the IPP. This would take the Illinois Prairie Path UNDER the CN Railroad tracks eliminating the inconvenience of waiting for freight trains.

#2 Do nothing. I ride my bicycle along the Aurora Branch of the IPP several times each month. I have never had to wait for a freight train on the CN tracks for very long. I just do not see a problem.

**Talking Points:**

- The proposal will not fix the problem. The proposed detour will take trail users across the exact same railroad tracks, at grade, 2/10 on a mile to the north of the problem crossing. Does the County really believe that trail users will spend less time waiting for trains at the detour?
- The proposal will be dangerous to trail users. The proposed detour will take trail users directly along side Eola Road, a four lane highway for 6/10 of a mile and directly through the 8 lane intersection at Eola and Diehl Roads! Do you really want to take your children on a bike ride or walk in this area?
- The proposal will be very very expensive. The Eola Road Bridge over the tollway (I88) is currently 48 inches wide on the side that pedestrians and bike riders use.. The proposal includes widening Eola Road bridge over I88. Do taxpayers really want to spend money to widen the Eola Road Bridge over I88?
- The proposal will make the IPP unusable in the winter. Snow plows will push snow off of Eola Road directly onto the proposed detour. Should snow shoe users, cross country skiers, and all other activity on the IPP be stopped in the winter because of this detour?
- The proposal will permanently damage the trail experience. Does anybody think it will be enjoyable to ride along side Eola Road?
- The proposal detours trail users onto property not owned by DuPage County that is often closed. The Illinois Prairie Path Batavia Spur from the Aurora Branch west for 2.2 miles is not owned nor controlled by the County. Much of this land is owned and controlled by NICOR gas. In the last six years this section of the IPP was closed for two entire summers due to gas line construction. Is it right to detour all trail users between the towns of Warrenville and Aurora and/or Batavia on property that is often closed?
- The proposal will make useless four very expensive public works projects already in place. The bridge under the tollway (I88) between Diehl Road and the Batavia Spur of the IPP; the center median “safety barrier” where the IPP Aurora Branch crosses Diehl Road; the DuPage County Forest Preserve parking lot on the south east corner of Diehl and Shore Roads; and the pathway along Frontenac, Diehl, and the CN tracks. Do taxpayers really want to see expensive projects rendered useless?
- The historic Illinois Prairie Path will be harmed forever. The Illinois Prairie Path was the very first path in the world that converted abandoned railroad right-of-way to recreational trail. Can we let this historic trail be destroyed forever?

**Please - Please - Please get the word out, we need to fill the auditorium at the open house that is being held at the following time/location. Stop this project NOW!**

**Thursday, August 3, 2017**

**4:00 – 7:00 pm**

**Matea Valley High School – Main Entrance Atrium**

**1801 North Eola Road**

**Aurora Illinois 60502**

Bob Sobie  
Trail Advocate