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Railroad mergers heighten concerns

Ownership structures trigger period of tension, uncertainty

By John Lippert
FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

When Karen Darch started agitating in 2007 for an underpass so U.S. Route 14 can pass beneath the Canadian National railroad tracks in Barrington, she had six children and no grandkids.

Nineteen years later, as workers are shattering the affluent quiet of her suburban street by pounding retaining walls for the underpass into place, she has seven grandchildren.

Darch says she can't say how many grandchildren she'll have when the half-mile, \$94 million underpass is finally complete, hopefully by the end of next year.

But now, Darch is confronting a problem that could aggravate her grandchildren for decades to come.

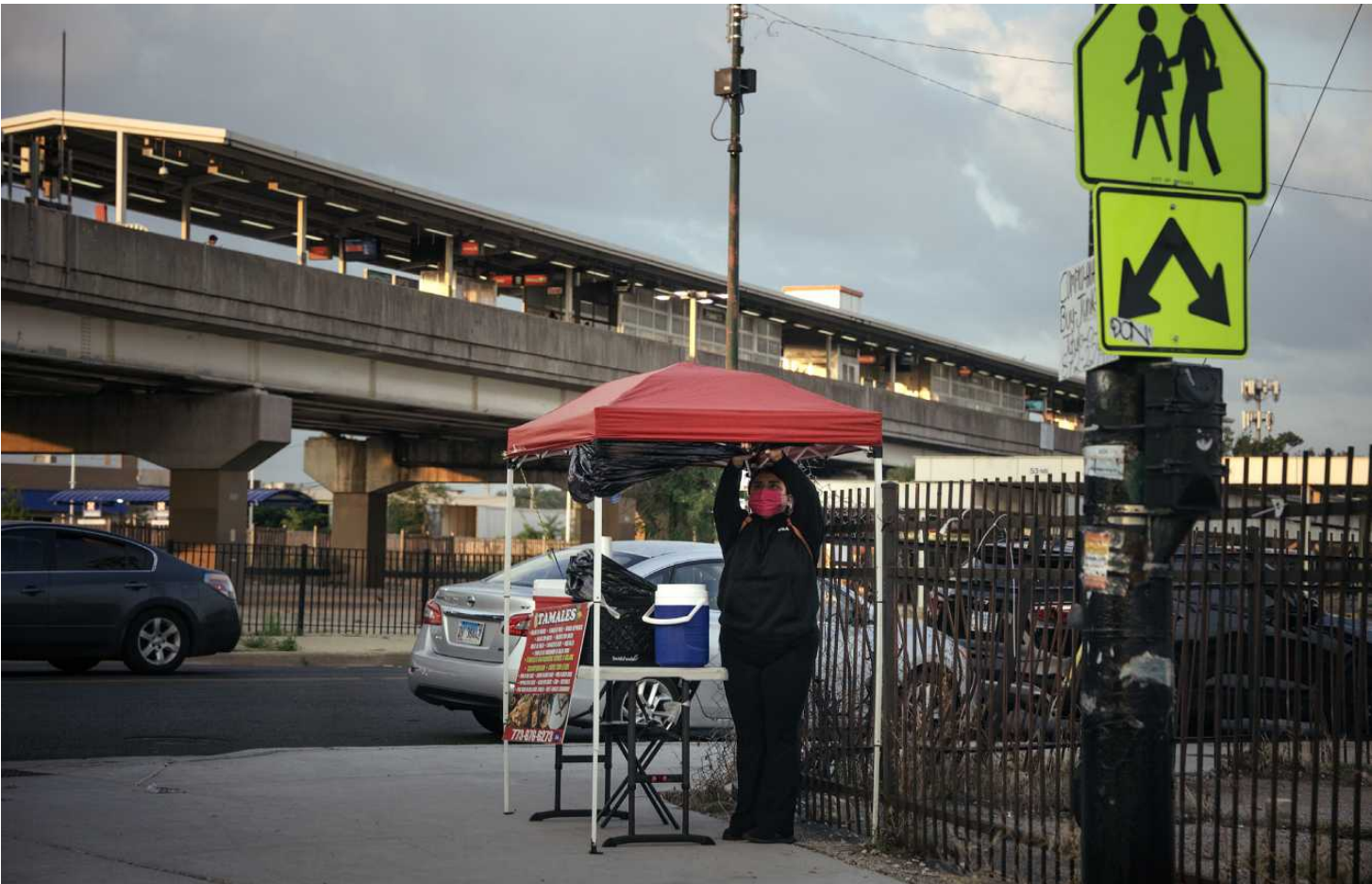
That problem is a new round of mergers that's putting the ownership structure of North American railroads through a blender and triggering a prolonged period of tension and uncertainty.

Union Pacific, in tandem with its \$85 billion takeover bid for Norfolk Southern, has agreed to start running more trains over Canadian National's suburban Chicago network. At the outset, this will include rerouting some trains now running through inner-city Chicago.

Darch, an attorney who served as Barrington's village president for 20 years until last year, says she believes that sooner or later, the railroads will build a second freight track through Barrington, a suburb 35 miles northwest of Chicago. That's because Canadian National has already spent years double-tracking the line to within 10 miles south of Barrington, she said.

In theory, rail experts say, this second track could mean dozens of additional Canadian National and Union Pacific freight trains roll-

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'How do we heal?'

One year after Operation Midway Blitz, a changed Chicago forges on after the resistance

By Andrew Carter, Caroline Kubzansky, Gregory Royal Pratt and Laura Rodríguez Presa | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

People in Little Village used to go to Baltazar Enríquez's office to get their whistles. He estimates he handed out thousands last year during the immigration raids that roiled Chicago and its surrounding suburbs.

When they walk in now, it's not whistles they're after. It's empathy. Someone to listen. A moment to vent or to grieve in the aftermath of what the administration of President Donald Trump touted as Operation Midway Blitz.

"How do we heal?" Enríquez, the president of the Little Village Community Council, asked recently. "That's the part we're learning."

It has been a year since the blitz commenced with the detainment of a man selling flowers in nearby Archer Heights. What began there, on the corner of South Archer Avenue and South Pulaski Road, with Leodegario Martínez Barradas dropping his flowers while federal agents handcuffed him and led him away, quickly spread throughout

Above: A tamale vendor sets up a stand at the intersection of South Archer Avenue and South Pulaski Road in the Archer Heights neighborhood on Aug. 28. This is the intersection where Leodegario Martínez Barradas, a flower vendor, was the first person detained in Chicago during Operation Midway Blitz. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Chicago.

It left tamale carts deserted. Landscaping equipment abandoned. Cars on the side of the road, with keys still in the ignition. People, gone.

For 64 days, the city and its suburbs came to be under siege. For 64 days, starting with the detainment of the flower vendor on Sept. 7, 2025, and ending in November with Border Patrol agents posing for a mocking class picture in Millennium Park, their leader Gregory Bovino in the middle, the federal government carried out a militarized immigration enforcement operation under the guise of making Chicago safer.

How is it, then, that a year later, people can feel so unsafe?

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security asserted that it would target "the worst of the worst."

"Operation Midway Blitz achieved what Chicago's sanctuary politicians have refused to do for decades: decrease crime and remove the worst

See **BLITZ** on Page A12

Local victims, heroes of 9/11 remembered 25 years later

By Angie Leventis Lourgos
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The mysterious call came in around 7:40 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001.

Sue Mladenik was making the bed in her Hinsdale home and quickly grabbed a nearby phone, hoping the unusually early noise wouldn't awaken her young daughter.

But after the mother said hello, there was nothing but a dial tone.

The screen of the landline only offered the cryptic message "no data sent," with no other information on the caller or number on the other end of the line.

A few minutes later, the terror

began.

Through clear blue skies, traveling faster than 400 miles per hour, American Airlines Flight 11 struck the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York.

The Boeing 767 crashed between the 93rd and 99th floors, soon felling the iconic skyscraper and instantly killing the 87 passengers and crew aboard the plane.

Watching in horror as news channels replayed footage of that scene over and over, Sue Mladenik would think about that strange disconnected phone call she received just before the jetliner

See **9/11** on Page A10



Sue Mladenik holds a photo of her husband, Jeffrey Mladenik, in her home in Sugar Grove on Aug. 20. Jeffrey was a passenger on American Airlines Flight 11, and was killed when his plane was hijacked by terrorists and struck the World Trade Center's north tower on Sept. 11, 2001. **EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

INSIDE

Ishbia shares vision for new Sox stadium

Justin Ishbia on Saturday unveiled his plan for a new White Sox ballpark on the banks of the Chicago River in the South Loop in a development plan called the Railyards. **Sports**

Debate steps up over city building code

Allowing single-stair complexes could create needed housing, but safety concerns from the fire department loom in discussions about the ordinance. **Chicagoland, Page A3**

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Cultures, history harmonize in Güzelyurt



Güzelyurt, a town on the edge of Turkey’s rural region of Cappadocia, is one of my favorite discoveries in this bizarre and fascinating corner of central Turkey. It sits at the edge of the Ihlara Valley, about 35 miles from the regional capital of Nevşehir. It’s best known in Turkey as a town where historic enemies — Greeks, Turks, Kurds and Bulgarians — live in peace. I like it as a place with almost no tourism, lots of history and plenty of Turkish character.

Güzelyurt is a harmony of cultures, history, architecture and religions. Averse to change, small towns like this are cultural humidors, keeping fragile traditions full of local flavor. A bust of Atatürk — the founder of modern Turkey, who insisted on a separation of mosque and state — looms high over the small, modern market square at the heart of town.

Güzelyurt is filled with people enjoying petite glasses of sweet çay (tea) and the happy clatter of backgammon dice. Backgammon makes for a fun way to interact with locals — particularly the men of this town, who seem to be enjoying one eternal cigarette break. If you don’t know how to play, it’s no problem. (If you pause, someone’ll likely move for you.)

Strolling streets that have changed little over the centuries, I pause to take in the village’s sounds. It’s an ancient soundtrack — the timeless white noise of daily life: Children play, birds chirp, roosters crow, shepherds chase goats and mothers cackle. (I ignore that distant motorbike.)

I hike steeply down into a ravine, winding through a community in the rough,



The snowy volcanic slopes of Mount Hasan’s double peaks rule the horizon of Cappadocia over Güzelyurt. **RICK STEVES**

where the chores of daily life seem stuck in the Middle Ages. I come upon a little boy playing a flute as his mother cooks and, with gestures, gain the boy’s permission to give the ancient-looking instrument a try. It’s carved out of an eagle bone, just like in biblical times. As I hand it back to him I hear another flute, out of sight, coming from over the hill.

Climbing up the opposite side, my vista extends out over a lush and living gorge. Sixteen centuries ago, monks built monasteries into its cliffsides. The structures that resulted seem one with the volcanic rock out of which they were carved. Erosion drove most of the residents of the ancient town to more stable dwellings, but some remain,

helping you appreciate the tenacity of Güzelyurt’s people.

Though seemingly abandoned, there’s still life in the old town. Residents somehow eke out a living from its crumbling terraces and neglected gardens. People do their humble chores as if stubbornly refusing to give up on Güzelyurt.

Right below me, sleeping in the greens and wet browns of this tidepool of simple living, is the former church of St. Gregorius. For centuries, Christians worshipped here, and the town had an interesting connection with Turkey’s neighbor to the west, Greece.

Until the early 1800s, Greece and Turkey were both part of the Ottoman Empire. There were

Muslim communities in Greece and Greek Orthodox communities in Turkey. Like many Turkish towns, Güzelyurt was once Greek. Then in the 1920s, they had a huge population swap — most Christians here were moved to Greece, and Muslims there were sent to Turkey. So, Güzelyurt’s historic church became a mosque — indicated by its single minaret.

The cliff rising from the gorge is stacked with building styles: Above the 1,600-year-old church sit troglodyte caves, Selçuk arches and Ottoman facades. Beyond them gleams the tin dome of a 20th-century mosque, with its twin minarets giving a constant visual call to prayer. On a nearby hillside, I see the letters G-Ü-Z-E-

L-Y-U-R-T spelled out in white rocks. The town’s name means “beautiful land.” To my left, and much farther in the distance, the snowy volcanic slopes of Mount Hasan’s double peaks rule the horizon.

Hiking a little farther from town, I see the source of the music I’d heard from a distance: the goat-tending father of the flute-playing boy I’d met earlier. As herding families in rural Turkey have done for generations, both the father on the hillside and the son at home with mom play the eagle-bone flute — and the entire family knows that all is well. I realize that the mother regularly goes about her day with the comforting sound of her husband tending their flock.

Though he’s off on the

hillside all day, the music means the family is somehow still together.

Cresting the goatherder’s bluff, I survey the view and marvel at how the honey that holds this architectural baklava together is the people who live here — and the traditions they hold dear.

While not all visitors would consider Güzelyurt particularly beautiful, that’s how the people who call it home see it. They’d live nowhere else. For them, and to me, it truly is a güzel yurt.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

LA quartet pens songs on serious car rides

By **Jae-Ha Kim**
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

This summer, Kim Theory made its Lollapalooza debut in Chicago. Comprised of vocalist Audrey Cymone, drummer Zoey Su, guitarist Lula Seifert and bassist Lucy Fraser, the band of 16-year-old musicians also opened for “Stranger Things” actor-musician Finn Wolfhard at the festival’s aftershow, and is opening for the riot grrrl group Bratmobile in September.

Because of their age — they are juniors in their respective greater Los Angeles-area high schools — members generally stick to playing concerts not too far from home.

Asked if they’ve thought about the logistics of keeping the band together after they graduate, Fraser said, “I think we all plan on going to college after high school. Whether or not we are able to stick together solidly as a band is up to the future to decide. But we want to stay a band and keep making music together, because we love each other and what we’ve created.”

This interview with the members of Kim Theory has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Where were you when you found out you would be playing at Lollapalooza?
Cymone: I remember being in my living room. On our group chat, I saw the offer come in. I was so excited. I told my dad about it, and then he started losing his mind. We are so grateful for the opportunity.

Q: What has been your favorite vacation destination?



Kim Theory performed at this year’s Lollapalooza and enjoyed visiting the Bean in Chicago. **CHARLIE BERNSTEIN**

Su: London, because I loved the architecture of the city, the thrifting and the public transport system was great.

Q: What is your bucket-list venue that you have yet to perform in?
Fraser: A dream venue of all of ours is the Troubadour. It is such an iconic LA venue with so much history and stories behind it. Hopefully, we can play that soon. We would love to have the chance to play at the Wiltern. We’re super excited to play the Lodge Room (with Bratmobile) on September (13).

Q: What do you remember about your first gig?
Seifert: It was at the Redwood Bar & Grill downtown. We packed the place out with all our friends and all our friends’ parents. Even one of our teachers in middle school came. It was super fun, and it was a great first gig experience!

Q: Have you written or worked on any songs while you were on the road?
Cymone: Yes! Lula and I wrote one of our unreleased songs in an hourlong car ride on the way to a sleepover. We reworked the lyrics to one of our older songs while driving home from the San Francisco show of the Willowake tour we just completed. We take car rides very seriously.

Q: When you go away, what

are some of your must-have items?
Su: I always bring a toothbrush and a clean pair of socks in case something bad happens to my old pair.

Q: What was a trip you took that still stands out?
Cymone: I had the opportunity to go to South Africa for an acting job. It was such a beautiful place and it was so amazing getting to see the city and the nature landscapes.

Q: If you’ve ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?
Seifert: For the new year, I go to Joshua Tree with my family and our friends. It’s so fun, and I hope we continue this tradition.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?
Fraser: One of my dream vacation destinations has always been Australia and New Zealand. I’m so obsessed with everything their ecosystem and wild-life has to offer.

Q: What is your best vacation memory?
Cymone: When I went to New York City for my 16th birthday, I got to see one of my favorite actors, Jack Wolfe, in the Broadway musical “Hadestown.” It was genuinely life changing.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Renter shocked by extra charge after returning car early to Avis

By **Christopher Elliott** | KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

I booked a car in Spain through Booking.com for a rental with Avis. Everything seemed fine until I had a family emergency and had to return the vehicle early. At no stage during the booking process or at the rental desk was I informed that returning the car early would result in an increased cost.

Imagine my shock when I saw an unauthorized charge of \$673 on my credit card. Returning the car early effectively doubled my rental cost. I never received any communication about this fee. It’s unjustified; Avis could’ve rerented the car the second that I dropped it off.

I’m a medic, and I often work in the North Sea where mobile signals are difficult. So, I’ve had to try and manage this via email and WhatsApp. It’s incredibly frustrating because Avis eventually admitted that it was at fault and issued a refund, yet it’s still holding onto about \$130. I want the full amount owed, not a partial amount. Can you help me get my remaining money back?

— *Christine Grosart, in Evercreech, England*

A: Avis should’ve refunded you the moment that it overcharged you. Actually, scratch that — it should’ve never charged you in the first place. If a company admits that it made a mistake, it shouldn’t be a struggle to get a full refund. It certainly shouldn’t require a medic to take time away from her duties in the North Sea to chase down a missing \$130.

Rental car companies often have automated systems that trigger early return fees or rate changes if you drop the car off sooner than what was originally planned. While their policies often state that rates are subject to change if the rental period is altered, these changes shouldn’t be applied in error, as Avis later acknowledged happened in your case.

You could’ve avoided part of this by carefully reviewing the final receipt before leaving the rental lot. I

know that you’re tired and want to get home, but this is the moment when you have the most leverage. You also did the right thing by starting a paper trail. As I always say, “If it isn’t in writing, it didn’t happen.”

When you run into a wall like this, you can always escalate your complaint to the executives at Avis or Booking.com. You can find these contacts on my site at Elliott.org. I’ve dealt with similar fuzzy math from rental companies before. In a previous case involving Budget (which is owned by the same parent company, Avis Budget Group), a customer was hit with a cleaning fee that felt more like a penalty than a service charge. It seems that these errors have a habit of leaning in the company’s favor.

I reached out to Avis on your behalf and asked it to review your case. “We can confirm that the additional charge related to a quoted rate change due to (an)

early return was applied in error and should not have been charged,” a representative told me.

However, it turns out that part of the missing money was an additional driver fee that you signed for at the time of renting.

Avis sent over a copy of your signed agreement to prove it. “Charges that are clearly included and accepted on the signed rental agreement are considered contractually agreed upon and are not eligible for refund,” the company noted.

Your total refund comes to \$552. While you didn’t get the driver fee back, you received the rest of your money.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.