

The magic of Norfolk Southern.

Lost in all the discussion about the proposed Norfolk Southern hub in McCalla is the amazing power that Norfolk Southern is claiming – the power over light, sound and air. It was a given that Norfolk Southern had the ability to make all sorts of people and local organizations fall in line with their position – after all, they have deep enough pockets to make a lot of people dance to their tune. That’s just about making promises and writing checks – nothing magical at all about that power. But when you listen to how they address some of homeowners concerns about the hub, they are apparently claiming to have some amazing control over the fundamental laws of nature.

Take for instance the concern about the tall 100 foot light towers that will be needed to illuminate the hub at night – needed since this will be a 24/7 operation. These light towers will have “focused” light that shines the light only where it is needed – none of the light will stray over into the backyards that are just a few hundred feet away. That’s amazing – they have the power to illuminate a 300 acre site with 100 foot light towers, and yet if you were standing just a few hundred feet away in the middle of the night, you’d never know it was there. The dark star-filled summer nights that you moved out to McCalla to experience will be exactly as dark and star-filled next summer as they were this summer, because none of the light from the yard will escape. It’s almost like they’ve created some sort of black hole that will prevent light from escaping the site. So, that sounds almost too good to be true, but Norfolk Southern wouldn’t tell us that they had this power if they didn’t really have this power – would they?

Norfolk Southern is claiming a similar power over sound. They are going to build these “magic walls” around the site that are going to keep all the sound within the site. Isn’t that something? Apparently, if you build a 15 foot high berm around a site, all sound will be magically contained. I’m not a scientist, but I guess that means that sound waves must not travel higher than 15 feet off the ground. So for the folks that live in Sadler Ridge and the kids that go to McAdory Elementary – no worries at all about hearing any sound at all any of the 160,000 containers per year that will handled at the site – your neighborhood and school will not be disturbed in any way from any sound from the operations of this site – your solitude will be protected by Norfolk Southern’s magic walls.

However, the most impressive magic is the power that Norfolk Southern apparently has over air. While they will admit that they have black hole technology to control light, and magic walls to control sound, they won’t even disclose how they are going to keep all the diesel exhaust from the trains and 400 trucks a day from impacting the surrounding air. They simply say that they diesel exhaust will not be a health problem or concern, without divulging how they are going to keep the bad air from their side of the magic wall from spreading into the good country air outside the magic wall. My only guess is that the technology that they are using is so secret, they can’t divulge it in any public meetings. We just have to trust them, and after all, they are just trying to be a good neighbor, so why wouldn’t we trust them?

Of course, we all know there is no magic wall, no secret control of the diesel fumes, no black hole that sucks up stray light. There is no magic that would allow them to build a 300+ acre rail yard in the middle of a residential neighborhood, load and unload 400 trucks a day on that site, and handle 150,000 large containers every year and have zero impact on the quality of life in that neighborhood. At the end of

the day, if this facility is built, we will see more light at night, hear more noise and breathe more diesel fumes that we do right now. For Norfolk Southern to suggest otherwise is both laughable and insulting to our intelligence.

No, I do not believe in their magic. In fact, there is only one magic trick that Norfolk Southern can perform that will keep our neighborhood exactly as it is right now – they can make their plans for the McCalla hub disappear.