



Illinois Department of Transportation

2300 South Dirksen Parkway / Springfield, Illinois / 62764

December 11, 2006

Ms. Victoria Ruston, Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

RE: Finance Docket No. 34177

Dear Ms. Ruston:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the **Iowa, Chicago & Eastern Railroad Corporation – Acquisition and Operation, Exemption – Lines of I&M rail Link, LLC**. I am submitting these comments on behalf of the Illinois Department of Transportation. We believe that further analysis should be conducted on the impact that this future freight movement will have on the passenger, commuter and freight rail network in the metropolitan Chicago region.

As you are already aware, Chicago is the nation's hub for freight traffic, one of the major hubs for Amtrak, and has an extensive commuter rail network. These rail services share tracks individually owned by the Class 1 railroads, most of which are currently operating at full capacity. Any additional service that will utilize the rail network should be closely analyzed to determine any potential impacts or risks that may result.

The Department spearheads and provides oversight to variety of rail implementation and planning projects. In partnership with the City of Chicago and the Association of American Railroads (AAR), we are undertaking an ambitious \$1.5 billion rail-infrastructure improvement plan to improve freight, passenger, and commuter rail service as well as reduce motorist delays, increase safety and improve air quality. The **Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program** is considered a project of national significance, as any improvements to the rail infrastructure in Chicago will benefit the movement of freight across the nation.

Ms. Ruston
12/11/2006

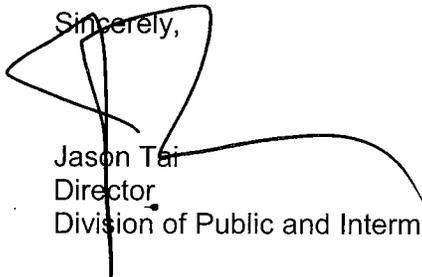
Through the efforts of the Illinois General Assembly, additional funding has been provided for increased service on the state supported Amtrak routes. This is the first Midwestern Amtrak expansion in more than a decade and ranks Illinois second only to California in number of trains sponsored and the amount of state operating assistance provided. Metra, metropolitan Chicago's commuter rail agency, is undertaking studies for expansion beyond the traditional boundaries of the region, and has recently implemented several new services on existing routes.

The Department has been proactive in seeking input on all these projects from public and private sources, and continually advocates for improvements that will enhance our rail network and improve our global competitiveness.

Any new service, whether freight, passenger or commuter, is of obvious concern to the Department and our project partners. We request that it be carefully evaluated and reviewed, so as to prevent any adverse impacts to the state's rail network, and include the appropriate public outreach and input as a component of the analysis. We are encouraged that you will address these comments and are more than willing to assist in any future studies that may be undertaken by the Surface Transportation Board, specifically with regard to demand analysis and traffic impact for this proposed to new service.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at 312.793.2111. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Tai", is written over the typed name and title. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with a large loop at the top and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jason Tai
Director
Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation.