

January 9, 2008

U.S. Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423
STB Docket No. 35087

RE: Critical Concerns regarding the upcoming Environmental Impact Study for the Proposed Canadian National Railway Company Acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway Company

Dear Surface Transportation Board:

My husband and I are residents of the Village of North Barrington, Illinois, located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. As homeowners living only a few blocks away from EJ&J train tracks, we have many critical concerns regarding Canadian National's proposed purchase of the EJ&E railroad. We ask that the STB include the following concerns as part of its upcoming Environmental Impact Study (EIS)--and any additional study that STB deems necessary:

1. Safety Impact to Our Community and to Our Environment

The issue of utmost concern is the safety of our children who travel to and from school using school buses: of our school district's approximately 9,000 students, 7,000 take the bus. According to statistics from the Community Unified School District 220, its school buses cross the tracks a minimum of about 375 times daily. (Many residents remember the 1995 incident where seven students were killed and 21 injured because a bus bisected the METRA tracks by six inches.) With the increased train traffic on two perpendicular sets of tracks, the likelihood of such accidents will increase tremendously.

- We request that the CN's operational safety record in both Canada and the United States be examined and reflected in its accident rate evaluations -- including environmental "accidents." Specific CN environmental accidents that we are aware of are:
 1. The Lake Wabamun accident with spilling of more than 150,000 gallons of fuel oil.

2. The Cheakamus River accident filling the river with 10,000 gallons of toxic sodium hydroxide.
- We request your evaluation includes how CN's purchase will impact public health and safety. This should specifically analyze: emergency vehicle (ambulance, police and fire) delay (during the morning and peak travel periods and throughout the day) in each community and access to local hospitals; as well as delays in delivering children to and from schools during morning and evening peak periods.
 - This assessment should include an evaluation of each individual local jurisdiction's ability to respond to accidents, spills and derailments through their police, fire and emergency response agencies.
 - We request that the potential for pedestrian and bicycle accidents be forecasted at all at-grade crossings using a method acceptable and consistent with local jurisdiction accident rate methods. The Barrington area has recently experienced several student deaths at railroad crossings.

2. Economic Impact

Increased train traffic by CN throughout the Barrington area communities will be extremely negative. Local businesses, governmental and community services such as parks and schools in the greater Barrington area will be hit hard by the tremendous increase of lengthy trains running through it day and night.

- We request that a STB study include an economic impact analysis that quantifies the impact caused by delays and the decrease in timely access to local businesses and services located in the greater Barrington area. This analysis should identify those businesses which are most likely to be affected and to determine the loss of business and how the local tax base will be impacted as a result of this loss of business. We further request the study include specific mention of who will bear the cost and the sources of funding for any mitigation measures in the Barrington area.
 - The economic impact to our district and the financial impact to the community that will arise from adjustments to bus and school schedules, the need for new buses and revisions to existing negotiated contracts with teachers unions may all be affected by schedule changes resulting from increased travel times to and from schools. We would urge this same analysis be conducted for other school districts along the full route.

- We request that the study include an evaluation of the change in energy consumption resulting from increases in the delays of motor vehicles at all at-grade crossings along the EJ&E corridor for all build alternatives.

4. Impact on Wildlife, Forest Preserves & Wetlands

We request that the study identify all wildlife habitats and occurrences for areas of up to two miles on either side of the existing EJ&E corridor – and how CN's proposed purchase will impact them. We further request that the studies be conducted at the appropriate time of year, using protocols accepted by both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to find evidence of each species. We further request that mitigation for all potential impacts be defined and delineated in the environmental document.

- We request that habitat studies also be conducted for all Illinois listed threatened and endangered species for both all counties crossed by the EJ&E corridor including but not limited to Cook and Lake Counties. These studies should be conducted at the appropriate time of year for each species using protocols accepted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in order to find evidence of each species. We request that formal coordination be undertaken with all counties that are crossed by the EJ&E right of way, and with all county Forest Preserve Districts, particularly but not limited to the Lake County and Cook County Forest Preserve Districts.

We know the STB will agree that our concerns and requests detailed above are extremely urgent and need to be addressed by the STB as part of a thorough study of CN purchasing the EJ&J line.

Sincerely,



Nancy F. Matthews
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