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Surface Transportation Board
CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball
Environmental Filing
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

We are residents of the Deer Crossing subdivision in the Village of Hoffman Estates, Illinois, which lies adjacent to the western edge of the E.J. & E. rail line. We are writing to express our **firm opposition** to Canadian National Railroad's (CN) acquisition of the E.J. & E. line, because CN's proposed increased use of that line will have a negative impact on the environment of the people and communities neighboring the tracks.

I. The lack of adequate public infrastructure to support the proposed use of the rail line will impede emergency services, increase vehicular traffic congestion and travel times.

The public infrastructure surrounding the current E.J. & E. rail line was not designed to manage the volume of train traffic that CN proposes. E.J. & E. is primarily a single rail line that once ran through rural farm land. As a result of the modest traffic on that line, residential communities were built in those rural areas all along that line from Indiana to Waukegan. The infrastructure serving those communities was designed and built to accommodate the limited traffic restraints the rail line imposed on road travel, pollution, safety, etc. In other words, few overpasses, underpasses or alternative routes were planned to move vehicular traffic across the tracks as the limited number of trains (three to five per day) did not significantly impede vehicular travel. To now increase by five fold (as much as 25 additional trains per day) the train traffic on that line will tax the infrastructure and safety afforded those communities.

As examples, Shoe Factory Road, Barrington Road, Lake Cook Road, Northwest Highway and Cuba Road are all major vehicular traffic corridors crossed by the E.J. & E. tracks. These are only five of 133 grade level street crossings that the rail line crosses. Citizens use these roads daily to go to and from work, to connect to other towns and to transport their children on buses to and from school. Assuming 25 additional trains per day, each taking an average of six minutes, crossing these five roads alone, the increased train traffic will result in 12.5 hours per day of additional automobile and truck traffic stopped waiting for trains to pass, resulting in the air pollution caused by idling engines, increased traffic congestion and gridlock, additional travel times for citizens, including elementary and high school students attempting to get to school on time. Extending this rationale to all 133 grade level crossings, the citizens that use these 133 crossings would collectively incur 332.5 hours of additional wait time at these crossings per day. CN has stated that it was attracted to the E.J. & E. rail line because it would be able to move its trains south to north around Chicago in three hours instead of the "up to 12" hours it currently experiences by going through Chicago. For CN to gain nine hours for its trains, it would have the citizens who live as its neighbors incur 332.5 additional hours of commute time. The negative impact on the environmental quality of life is obvious.

Police, fire and emergency services use these crossings daily to reach businesses and homes that are in peril. Village of Hoffman Estates police, fire and emergency vehicles all travel west across the tracks in order to reach residents in the Western sections of the Village. Moreover, ambulances would have to travel east across the tracks in order to reach the closest trauma center, St. Alexius Hospital. In the Village of Barrington, ambulances dealing with emergencies in the Village could be cut off in both an easterly and northerly direction by the same train from being able to travel to its closest trauma center, Good Shepard Hospital. With the prospect of more than one train per hour, each a mile to two in length, taking an average of six minutes to clear the crossing, one can reasonably conclude that the potential for loss of life and property will be at greater risk with CN's proposed use than they are with the current and historic train volume (three to five trains per day) because of the increased interference with emergency vehicular traffic.

Most of these roads that cross the E.J. & E. were built with grade level crossings meant to accommodate the modest traffic of the current E.J. & E. lines. If train traffic is to increase by five fold, then most, if not all of these grade crossings will need to be rebuilt with over passes or underpasses so that the increased train traffic will not interfere with the vehicular traffic needed to accommodate the safety of the residents and businesses, their commutes to work, school, stores, etc. Clearly, the \$100 million that CN has stated it plans to spend on improvements as part of the acquisition is not adequate to upgrade the

surrounding infrastructure in ways that meet the health, safety and welfare needs of the communities neighboring this rail line.

Is our legislature, the Federal Government or CN prepared to invest in new infrastructure up and down the line to ensure that the quality of life for the residents of these communities is not diminished in favor of the financial gain of the CN and E.J. & E.? We suggest that government spending to help the CN, which already has an effective route to transport its freight, would be an imprudent expenditure of tax dollars.

II. The proposed volume of train traffic will create significantly more risk of derailment, noise pollution and ground vibration for the thousands of citizens living adjacent to and in the vicinity of the tracks and thus, will negatively impact the health, safety and welfare of the citizens who live along the E.J. & E. rail line.

As previously mentioned, many housing communities sprung up in the last twenty years along the E.J. & E. line which has traditionally carried coal, steel and other non toxic cargo. Thousands of citizens live as close as within 50 yards of the current tracks. CN proposes to increase train traffic by five fold, to approximately 25 to 30 trains per day carrying cargos that include toxic and hazardous chemicals. As you know, both Canadian and United States authorities have questioned CN's commitment to safety at times in the past. It was reported by Canadian news that the results of a Canadian Transport audit of CN conducted in 2005 revealed that 54% of its locomotives had safety defects and 50% of its trains had defective brakes. With residential communities lining these tracks, CN's proposed increased usage of the rails, coupled with CN's less than exemplary safety record puts the health, safety and welfare of the people and natural resources that share this rail corridor at serious risk from train derailments, collisions and other calamities.

Literally thousands of homes and buildings are constructed in close proximity to the tracks, where thousands of citizens live. Currently, the noise that results from the whistles, bells, engines, wheels, etc. of the passing trains is of little consequence because of the limited times (three to five trains per day) it occurs. However, to now increase train traffic by 25 additional trains per day will create nearly continuous noise throughout the day that will interfere with quiet enjoyment of the community, disrupt the sleep of school children and adults alike, impact safe decibel levels, and otherwise negatively impact the environment in which these citizens live.

Perhaps of least impact to the population as whole, but of great significance to the hundreds, if not thousands of homeowners who live in houses that border the tracks is the vibration that will be inflicted on their homes and buildings as a

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result of the passing trains. Is CN prepared to make restitution to those citizens whose homes are structurally impacted by its increased track usage?

III. The only benefit of this transaction inures to CN; none to the citizens, communities, or natural resources that co-exist with the E.J. & E rail line.

The fact that CN already has an existing, effective route is also reason to oppose this transaction. CN is currently using existing freight lines that have been established for many years. Its not like it needs the E.J. & E. tracks to move its freight - it has an existing, viable alternative. CN merely wants to move its freight faster and carry more of it to satisfy its corporate desire to increase its profit and to do so at the expense of our family's health and safety, as well as the thousands of other families and people along the E.J. & E rail line.

If rail congestion in the Chicago area is a problem, as CN indicates, then merely shifting the problem from one geographic area of the region to another is not an effective solution. Rather than shifting the current problems of congestion from the current CN lines to the E.J. & E., and creating new issues that impact the health, safety and welfare for its neighbors, the rail industry and our government should collaborate on a more holistic solution to the rail transportation issues in this region of the country. Until that time, CN has a viable, existing rail network it is currently using.

IV. Conclusion

We can appreciate a corporation's desire to increase its operations and revenues. However, when the health, safety and welfare of the environment in which our citizens live, communities operate and natural resources exist are negatively threatened, then the public good must prevail over private corporate gain. Ms. Johnson-Ball, as a government official, we respectfully call upon you as a steward of the health, safety and welfare of the public, to ensure that the citizens of the E.J. & E. community do not suffer from the harmful environment that will result if CN is allowed to proceed with this transaction as it has proposed. Please consider the public good in reaching your decision in this matter by **denying** approval of the CN acquisition of E.J. & E.

Sincerely,



Mary J Farley

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