

August 29, 2008

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

Attn: Environmental Filing, STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball,

As a resident of Hawthorn Woods, and a member of the Lake Zurich Area Chamber of Commerce, I would like to state my strong opposition to the Canadian National Rail Road's acquisition of the EJ&E Rail Road. This acquisition will destroy the local environment and ruin the economy of our communities. The State of Illinois and the Chicago metropolitan area can ill afford the negative consequences of this transaction.

The Canadian National has expressed no sincere interest in the environmental and economic needs of the Illinois communities that will be impacted by their operations. In fact, they have been less than cooperative with our local Hawthorn Woods officials.

In reviewing the EIS released by the STB, there is just cause for much alarm by all residents, businesses and industries paying property taxes in Hawthorn Woods. CN should not be allowed to expedite the approval and acquisition processes in advance of the upcoming Presidential inauguration. This matter is of such importance that it should be reviewed by the newly appointed STB members who will be in office to face the consequences of their decision.

The Hawthorn Woods Area Chamber of Commerce has gone on record opposing this transaction. And as a resident taxpayer, I strongly oppose this acquisition. My specific reasons are spelled out below:

- Disruptions to various businesses, negative impact on property values and hesitancy to build will impair realization of current and future plans within Hawthorn Woods's Downtown redevelopment area.
- Additional delays from a 400% increase in train traffic will negatively impact public, vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Average train lengths of 10,000 feet will block our at-grade crossings and all major arterial roads bringing traffic through downtown to a standstill.
- The added delay will increase emergency response times resulting in unnecessary loss of life.
- Community School District 95 buses cross the Village's at-grade crossings 233 times per day, which means an increase in train/school bus conflicts.
- The Lake Zurich High School and May Whitney Elementary School directly abut the existing tracks thereby presenting a hazard to students who cross the tracks despite the danger and the warnings.
- This transaction will seriously jeopardize the proposed STAR Line's viability to relieve the region's traffic congestion and air quality.

The STB must require CN to be 100% financially accountable to mitigate all of the adverse public safety and environmental impacts imparted on the effected communities. The STB should not ignore our pleas for full consideration of the mitigation measures stated below:

Land Use and Socioeconomics - It is estimated that home values near the rail line will decrease an average of 20% due to the 400% increase in freight trains. This will make areas planned or approved for residential and other uses no longer viable projects. Our current road infrastructure can not handle the vehicular traffic congestion created by this large of an increase in rail traffic.

Safety - Greater train frequency through our town will increase the probability of rail related accidents. The installation of barrier walls along the rail adjacent to residential and school property, pedestrian crossing bridges and controlled access points should be provided at no cost to Hawthorn Woods.

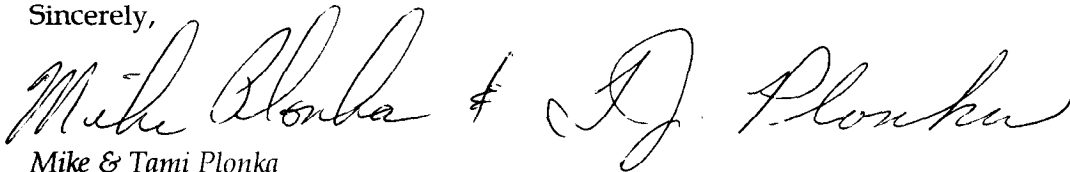
Hazardous Materials Transportation - Local emergency service responders must receive a detailed manifest of all hazardous materials being transported through our communities. Response training, evacuation planning, and response and recovery resources as it relates to the hazards being transported should be provided at no cost to Hawthorn Woods.

Noise and Vibration - The Quiet Zone currently in place through Hawthorn Woods should be maintained and honored by CN. Additionally CN should contact every property owner residing within 500 feet of the EJ&E tracks to discuss landscape buffers and/or fencing. Noise walls or other types of sound barriers should be built to mitigate sound and prevent egress and ingress onto the railroad right-of-way at no cost to Hawthorn Woods or its residents.

Transportation Systems - The intersection in downtown Hawthorn Woods would experience traffic backing up over the tracks, especially during peak times. CN should fund construction of overpasses and/or underpasses. We believe that mitigation for these at grade crossings is appropriate and warranted.

In closing, I would encourage the STB to REJECT the Canadian National Rail Road acquisition of the EJ&E Rail Road given the catastrophic impact it will have in Hawthorn Woods and all of the affected communities. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Plonka & Tami Plonka". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the names written in a single line.

Mike & Tami Plonka
6 Forest View Dr.
Hawthorn Woods, IL 60047