



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

EO 949

Section of Environmental Analysis

June 3, 2008

Normand Pellerin
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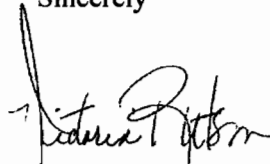
Re: STB Finance Docket No. 35087, Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation – Control – EJ&E West Company

Dear Mr. Pellerin:

Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 1506.5(a), attached is our fifth request for information needed for the purposes of the Section of Environmental Analysis' environmental review in connection with the above-referenced proceeding. As we have discussed, we need additional information to complete the technical analysis and prepare the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This information specifically relates to the proposed transaction, associated rail improvements, and rail yard operations.

Thank you for your continued assistance. Please provide a copy of your response as soon as possible to Phillis Johnson-Ball of my staff and to our independent third-party consultant, John Morton, at HDR, 8404 Indian Hills Drive, Omaha, Nebraska, 68114-4098.

Sincerely



Victoria J. Rutson
Chief

Section of Environmental Analysis

Cc: Phillis Johnson-Ball, STB
John Morton, HDR Engineering, Inc.

STB Finance Docket No. 35087, Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation – Control – EJ&E West Company

Information Request #5
June 2, 2008

(1) Des Plaines River Lift Bridge: Background - According to the Lockport lock operator, 4,500 vessels a year use the lock facility which is located just upstream from the EJ&E's Des Plaines River lift bridge. The locks do not operate during the winter months when they are iced up, so we are assuming that the locks function nine months a year. That results in about 16 vessels per day passing through the locks, assuming a constant flow of traffic seven days per week. We are further assuming that each vessel passage requires a bridge lift. According to EJ&E sources and confirmed in a CN letter to SEA, the bridge opens about 35 times each day. This number of bridge lifts seems high. We also understand that the lift bridge takes a couple of minutes to raise and lower. However, we need to know the total time required for the vessel to call for the bridge to be raised, wait for the bridge to be raised, for the ship to pass under the lift span, and finally for the lift span to close with the locking mechanism signaling when the span is again locked up. We are assuming this procedure takes 15 minutes.

Questions:

Please clarify the operation of the Des Plaines River Lift Bridge. Also, are you aware of any seasonal peaking effect of river traffic based on commodity demand? Also, can you provide more detailed information to describe the impact of the lift bridge operation on the EJ&E's network capacity?

(2) Pre & Post Switch Engine Usage Kirk Yard and East Joliet Yard (Potential Increase): Background - CN has stated in their Operating Plan that the number of cars switched per day in Kirk Yard will increase from 685 to 2039 cars and in East Joliet Yard, from 500 to 709 cars. USEPA and other stakeholders have asked us whether the number of switch engines used and the number of switch engine-hours at each yard location will increase as a result of the proposed transaction.

Questions:

What is the current number of switch engines used per day at Kirk Yard and at East Joliet Yard? What would be the number of switch engines required under CN's proposed post acquisition operations plan? What is the total number of switch engine-hours and throttle settings at each rail yard?

(3) Pre & Post Switch Engine Usage at CN Yards (Potential Decrease):

Questions:

What is the current total number of switch engines used per day at BRC Clearing Yard, Glenn Yard, Bridgeport Yard and Hawthorne Yard? What would be the number of switch engines required under CN's proposed post acquisition operations plan?

What is the total number of switch engine-hours and throttle settings at each of these yards?

(4) Kirk Yard Layout and Mainline Staging Capacity: Background: Kirk Yard handles 685 cars per day. If the Board should approve the proposed transaction, CN's proposed Operating Plan indicates that the number of cars switched would increase by 1354 cars which results in perhaps nine to ten new trains per day. CN's Operating Plan indicates that "CN would assess both the capabilities of Kirk Yard and CN's requirements for its use, and would change operating processes at Kirk Yard and upgrade and expand facilities to meet those requirements." Stakeholders have expressed concerns that Kirk Yard, as currently configured, will not accommodate the proposed volume of cars to be switched. Consequently, some stakeholders suggested that CN may stage the overflow of trains to be switched to a staging area on the EJ&E Lakefront Branch Rail Line.

In addition, if these trains are 8000 to 10,000 feet long and the south yard at Kirk Yard can only accommodate a train 7500 feet long, then each inbound train would require a double over. Assembling outbound trains would also require a double over after an air test is completed.

Questions:

Please clarify CN's proposed car classification and train staging functioning in Kirk Yard?

Due to the increased number and length of the trains entering and leaving Kirk Yard, will the south yard in Kirk Yard need to be expanded or will a staging yard need to be constructed on the EJ&E Lakefront Branch Rail Line?

(5) East Joliet Yard Layout and Mainline Staging Capacity: Background - The same staging issues discussed above for Kirk Yard may also result at East Joliet Yard where an increase in switching activity from 500 to 1209 cars, an increase of 709 cars per day, plus associated block-swapping capability could impact EJ&E mainline operations. Currently, the EJ&E operates one or two trains through East Joliet Yard each day. In addition, there is only 8,260 feet between Woodruff Road (an at-grade crossing north of the yard) and Rock Island Junction south of the yard.

Questions:

How does the EJ&E currently switch the East Joliet Yard; from the north end or from the south end of the yard?

Should the Board approve the transaction please clarify how CN proposes to change rail yard operations to effectively interface with this increase in train traffic? Also, how does CN plan to operate a train 10,000 feet long through the East Joliet Yard?

(6) Markham Yard Inter-Modal Activity: Background - On January 28, 2008, CN responded to Information Request #1, Item 20 (letter dated December 18, 2007) that CN has no plans to develop intermodal facilities anywhere along the EJ&E rail line if the proposed transaction is approved. On February 15, 2008, CN submitted additional information on Markham Yard regarding a new Markham Gate. This information, referenced as Exhibit D, was designated CONFIDENTIAL. Recently stakeholders have stated that CN plans to expand inter-modal activity at Markham Yard.

Question:

Does CN have any plans to expand inter-modal activities at Markham Yard either in the near or long-term future?

(7) Segment CN-27 between Hayford and Elsdon:

Question:

Can CN provide train data information for this segment?

(8) Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) vs Track Warrant Control (TWC):

Background - EJ&E's existing control system is composed of alternating segments of CTC and TWC. CN has provided information as to the location of track capacity improvement projects and where rail connections need to be improved. We understand that at each connection, all turnouts will be power-operated. However, the Application does not contain information about CN's plans to implement a control system that might improve EJ&E's existing CTC/TWC system of controlling train movements.

Question:

Does CN have any plans to develop a system-wide CTC network?

(9) Proposed Joliet Connection and National Register Eligible Bridges:

Background – Cultural resources surveys conducted for the CN EJ&E Acquisition EIS have identified two bridge structures in the area of the proposed Joliet connection that have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by IDOT. The two structures are the existing EJ&E railroad bridge over IL 171 (Collins Road) and the 16th Street Bridge over Deep Run Creek and the CN rail line (see attached map showing the National Register eligible resources).

Question:

Does CN have any plans to modify or alter either of these two bridge structures as a result of the construction of the Joliet connection should the proposed transaction be approved?

[illegible]

Proposed Corrections