

VILLAGE OF BUFFALO GROVE



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The Honorable Vernon A Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Secretary
395 E Street, S W
Washington, DC 20423-0001

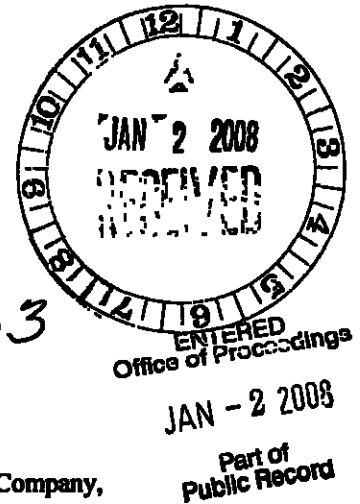
RE Canadian National Railway Co acquisition of control of the EJ&E West Company,
STB Finance Docket No 35087

Dear Secretary Williams,

The Village of Buffalo Grove would like to take this opportunity to express our strong support for the proposed acquisition by Canadian National Railway Company ("CN") of control over the EJ&E West Company ("EJ&E"). Our community is a northwest suburb of Chicago. CN's Wisconsin Central tracks run through our community. The proposed acquisition would have a significant effect on the Village of Buffalo Grove.

It is our hope that if the proposed transaction is approved, CN's rerouting of certain existing freight traffic to the EJ&E will allow for better utilization of CN's Wisconsin Central line. Many of our residents rely on Metra's North Central commuter line that operates over CN's Wisconsin Central tracks. The demand for commuter service on that line remains extremely high. The proposed acquisition should result in a significant benefit by providing windows of opportunity for improved and expanded Metra North Central service to address unmet weekday service demands, as well as possible commencement of weekend service, thereby improving quality of life in the region and enhancing the utility and viability of the intermodal connection between the North Central service and Chicago's O'Hare airport. In addition, we would note the following specific points of regional benefit commending the proposal.

- It has been represented to us that at least some of the obstacles preventing expanded or improved service on the Metra North Central line, the precise (often less than ideal) scheduling of trains, and the chronic delays on that line, result directly from freight operations of the CN. The proposed, substantial decrease in CN freight traffic south of the Lemont station, which is north of Buffalo Grove, from an average of 194 trains to 2 or fewer trains per day, reasonably can be expected to provide considerably increased flexibility for Metra to enhance the North Central schedule by varying departure and arrival times, and to add more daily trains, thereby substantially improving the quality of service on that line.
- The North Central Service, at this point in time, does not offer weekend commuter service. Again because of the shift of freight traffic at Lemont onto the EJ&E, we anticipate there would be rail capacity available to allow for the possibility of Metra service during the weekend. At a minimum, communities along the line would be afforded an opportunity to work with Metra to commence weekend service.
- In addition, we anticipate that regional vehicular traffic congestion and other existing impacts will see incremental improvement as a result of the proposed shift of freight traffic. Generally speaking, critical east-west arterials in and around the Village of Buffalo Grove will be subject to



fewer conflicts for vehicular movements. Furthermore, extended delays and resulting impacts experienced when freight trains are stopped en route while they are waiting for Metra's allocated commuter periods to end or for permission from other railroads to be able to continue to move through and out of our community, will be dramatically reduced, if not eliminated completely.

As the Village of Buffalo Grove is very much supportive of this proposed transaction, we also would request that the Surface Transportation Board consider as part of its analysis two additional factors pertaining to safety and quality of life in northeast Illinois.

First, CN has indicated it has no present intention to increase freight traffic on its tracks south of Leighton, once the existing traffic is diverted to the EJ&E. We would remain somewhat concerned, however, if CN retains unlimited authority to operate additional trains south of Leighton, in addition to those to be operated on the EJ&E. The possibility of incrementally increased CN traffic, or movement of foreign railroads onto the tracks of the EJ&E and/or the CN would exacerbate rather than alleviate current capacity and other issues and, as such, would not produce expected regional benefits, most particularly the elimination of conflicts with Metra service. In short, we urge caution in how capacity gained south of Leighton may be redirected if the transaction is authorized.

Second, we also would suggest that a reasonable proportion of the \$100 million that CN is proposing to spend in connection with its acquisition of control of the EJ&E, be dedicated to infrastructure improvements that allow enhanced train speeds, thus reducing the extent of possible adverse impacts upon major roads that intersect the EJ&E. A number of communities to the west of the Village of Buffalo Grove have expressed concerns that increased freight movement on the EJ&E could result in some level of adverse impact on vehicular movements. We would thus request that grade separations be considered where feasible, in coordination with State and County Highway Authorities, in order to accomplish safe movement of the proposed increased freight traffic on the EJ&E.

The Village of Buffalo Grove understands the challenges of rail transportation in the greater Chicago area. We recognize as well the negative impacts freight operations can have on local road systems and the challenges freight operations present for Metra's ability to improve its service profile. It is not very often that an opportunity comes along, however, that offers the prospect of dramatic reductions in freight traffic through a heavily populated corridor, such as the existing CN route through near suburban Chicago and the core of the City. The Village of Buffalo Grove thus views the proposed project as a rare and valuable opportunity to create a more efficient surface transportation system, not only for the benefit of our specific community, but for the region as a whole. We also believe the regional benefits of the proposed transaction will substantially outweigh any adverse impacts.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input concerning this important change in transportation adjacent and within our community. The Village of Buffalo Grove urges the Surface Transportation Board to approve the proposed transaction as soon as possible. We also request that these comments be entered into the record of this Docket.

Sincerely,
Village of Buffalo Grove



William H. Brimm
Village Manager

cc Village President and Board of Trustees
Congressman Mark Kirk
Jim Kvedaras, Canadian National