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January 28, 2008

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

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball,

Surface Transportation Board

CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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HDR

Totally realizing that I am most likely wasting my time in writing this, I feel compelled to respond to the STB draft of the EIS Scope of Study regarding the Canadian National Railroad's imminent purchase of the EJ&E tracks.

It would be totally naïve of anyone living the communities in the path of CN's juggernaut to think, let alone believe, that the purchase is not already a done deal. We all know the political forces who have driven this purchase into fruition. We also realize that this study, unless focused totally on the affected communities and respective residents and done as detailed as possible, will most likely not amount to any significant difference to those communities which will be so heavily impacted by CN. There is a saying that "the devil is in the details". In this scenario, it is the lack of details that will undermine its credibility. We can only hope and pray that our own government will also watch over the well-being of its citizens thus effected.

We all realize that there may be some benefits of the CN purchase overall to the Regional economy, but where are the benefits to those effected communities and residents of those communities? The reason we have seen nothing in all of CN's communications, is because there aren't any. There is not one single benefit that CN can claim. Just ask Hunter Harrison to provide one. He will not be able to do so. The only effect of this purchase to the communities and its residents will be increased costs, both direct and indirect. The \$100mil investment that CN claims is solely in their own infrastructure. There is not a single dime earmarked from this to remediate the massive problems and costs that it will impose on these communities.

I am certain that the direct, increased safety, environmental, traffic, sound/vibrations and other impacts of the purchase have already been addressed by others. Yet, a very important aspect of this purchase is missing and also needs to be addressed in detail.

I have read and reread the draft EIS Scope of Work to see where and how the STB will study the socioeconomic impacts to the communities and residents thus affected. I only found one solitary reference in Section 3 Line E.

The STB needs to perform a detailed socioeconomic study within the EIS in how the purchase will effect equity losses and their direct impact on safety, education, quality of life and other services provided by these communities to their residents.

To think that the massive increase in freight train traffic will not effect residents' equity in their homes would be extremely naïve and totally irresponsible. One knows that CN's response to this will be "too bad". This cannot be the response of own government! The EIS must include an extensive section devoted to this aspect.

The losses of hundreds of millions of dollars in equity is not out of the ballpark. One only needs to look at how many homes are within striking distance of the tracks, all along the route. Homes within 2000 feet can probably look at a 10-15% decline in value once the juggernaut starts. This is because of noise, vibrations, pollution and other factors. Residents will have more difficulty selling their home because of this. This will drive down selling prices and home value in ALL the homes thus effected. Homes within 200 feet will definitely see greater impact. 30-40% decreases in value, if not more, would not surprise me. Barrington and other communities that will bear the brunt of CN will have greater regional impacts on lost equity, since the safety, traffic, and other problems caused by CN will be much more far-reaching.

So, what importance does this have on CN's ability to move more trains more rapidly through Illinois? Why would American's lost equity be just as or even more important than CN's increased efficiency and resulting profits? Simple! It does not take an economist to figure it out. Even if the direct personal impact to the residents is totally written off as the cost of doing business, there remains one critical by-product. **LOSS OF EQUITY MEANS LOWER TAX BASES AND DECREASED TAX REVENUE!** This decreases local government's ability to provide the vital safety and other services to its residents. This will happen at the same time that CN's juggernaut will demand greater levels of these very same services.

One can easily venture to say that CN's response will be "Just Raise Your Taxes and You'll be Fine". Kind of a double-edged sword that CN is expecting the effected communities and its residents to jump on. The impact here does not even include the losses in sales tax revenue that these communities can expect due to the significant traffic delays in getting around town.

The results of the EIS will be greatly diminished if these impacts are not included and extremely detailed.

So, please include this aspect within the final scope of the EIS. Foreign corporations may not care, but we hope that our own government will.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hans Atter".