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August 27, 2008

Phillis Johnson-Ball

Surface Transportation Board

395 E. Street, S.W.

Washington, DC 20423-0001

Ref: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball

I am the executive director of the Barrington Area Council on Aging in Barrington, Illinois. In this position over the past thirteen years, I have overseen the provision of a wide variety of programs and services for older adults and family caregivers in our community. The Barrington Area Council on Aging is the primary organization in the Barrington area that serves older adults and their family caregivers. We provide information on senior services; help seniors access public benefit programs; provide meals with wheels to frail elders; and offer a variety of educational and support groups to seniors and their caregivers, along with social/recreational programs for active seniors.

I am opposed to the Canadian National Railway Company's proposed acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern Railway Co., which operates a rail line that runs through the heart of the Village of Barrington. My reasoning is focused mostly on the negative impact I believe this acquisition will have on the health and well-being of older adults and their family caregivers in our community.

One of my greatest concerns is the impact that rail traffic will have on the ability of emergency responders, both paramedics and fire fighters, to respond quickly to an older adult or family caregiver in need of emergency care. Within a four-mile radius of downtown Barrington there are six facilities that house

Serving seniors, family caregivers, and the community

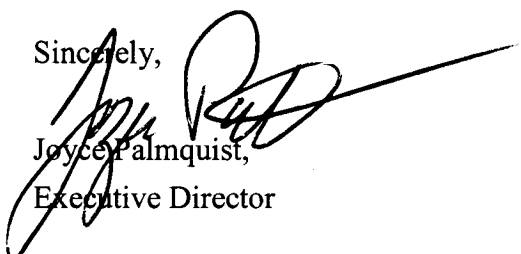
senior citizens or disabled individuals. They are Alden Estates of Barrington, 1420 S. Barrington Rd. (110 residents); Barrington Horizons, 1418 S. Barrington Rd. (59 residents); Greencastle of Barrington, 445 E. Main St (103 residents); The Garlands of Barrington, 1000 Garlands Lane (220 residents, and expanding); Sunrise Senior Living, 510 W. Northwest Hwy. (59 capacity); and Lake Barrington Woods, 22320 Classic Court (220 residents). In addition, we have a number of older adults who reside in condo developments in the Village. These developments include Shorely Woods, on Northwest Highway east of Route 59; Ela Street Apartments, and the Arbors of Barrington on W. Russell Street. This totals nearly 800 individuals at high risk of needing emergency medical attention. In addition, we know there are many additional seniors and disable individuals living in their own homes in our community with chronic illnesses which may also require emergency medical attention.

As you can see, there are a significant number of older adults in our community who would be affected by delayed emergency care. I have already heard seniors express great concern regarding the ability of emergency responders to assist them. For older adults, access to health care in general, and emergency care in particular, are ongoing concerns. If the EJ & E purchase is approved, grade crossing mitigation *must* be put in place where the rail line crosses Northwest Highway and Route 59.

As a result of existing rail activity, vehicle traffic congestion is already a serious issue in our community. I dread the thought of adding more volume without having a comprehensive management plan. BACOA's Meals with Wheels volunteers already complain about having difficulty delivering meals due to rail traffic delays. Our senior lunch and activity program is held at Langendorf Park, 235 Lions Drive, and most of the seniors who attend must cross the E J & E track at least once in order to get to the park to visit with their friends.

In a wider view, I am concerned about the impact on the quality of life of older adults in the Barrington community. Older adults are much more fearful of driving than younger people are, and they are also uncomfortable driving in heavy traffic. Increased rail traffic will have a major impact on these concerns and on seniors' willingness to drive in the area. Isolation is one of the greatest risks to the health and well-being of an older adult, and we must recognize that dramatically increased rail traffic can only weaken seniors' vital connections to the community.

Sincerely,



Joyce Palmquist,

Executive Director