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September 19, 2008

Phillis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423Re: Canadian National Railway Co, et al. – Control – EJ&E
West Company, STB Finance Docket NO 35087

I am writing to you regarding the proposed acquisition of Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway (EJ&E) by the Canadian National Railway Company (CN). As Superintendent of Reavis High School District 220, our community would greatly benefit from the reduction of rail congestion. In fact, 4.1 million Cook County residents will benefit from this transaction. The Chicagoland area is a vital hub for transportation, goods and services – including the rail system. We must protect the economic benefits of this vital component, especially in our trying economic times. Existing rail conditions can force a freight train to take more than 24 hours to travel through Chicago, an area that is only about 30 miles in length. Living near the rails I have witnessed trains standing idle on the tracks for hours, producing unnecessary air and noise pollution and impeding school buses and even emergency vehicles at times. This acquisition will allow goods to be moved more efficiently on the EJ&E rail line, thus reducing congestion on tracks throughout the Chicago region and in towns like mine, as well as provide an incentive for continued economic vitalization of freight carried.

As a community leader, it is imperative that I point out the safety benefits this acquisition will bring to our community as well as our surrounding area. This transaction will produce a net decrease in the number of train accidents on CN lines inside and on the EJ&E rail line. Overall, risk to pedestrians and bicyclists would also be reduced and passenger safety could potentially improve.

I understand it is important to address the pitfalls of this acquisition—as other residents may see an increase in rail traffic through their communities. But I can assure you that we will gladly work with neighboring communities through their frustration to find a solution to the slight increased rail traffic they may see. We have done it for so many years and if we can do it, so can they. We can work together on this! Our community has experienced congestion from Rail traffic for years, and we, like many other local communities, have been able to evaluate and implement solutions. We can provide insight, educational opportunity and expertise in working toward eliminating negatives and provide ways of dealing with the difficulties – as we work together.

It is important that the greater Chicago area maintain its standing as the transportation hub of North America (especially given the current economy's situation) but current rail conditions threatens this standing and produces a chilling effect on the competitiveness of the Chicago region as freight companies look elsewhere for new routes.

In conclusion, I would like for my opinions to be included relative to the STB's consideration of the DEIS. Given the aforementioned upsides of the merger, I strongly encourage you to approve CN'S purchase of EJ&E. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,


Dr. James Steyskal

Superintendent Reavis High School District 220/ 708.599.7200 ext. 247