

August 29, 2008

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

Attn: Environmental Filing, STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball,

As a resident of Hawthorn Woods, and a board member of the Summit Homeowners Association in Hawthorn Woods, I would like to state my strong opposition to the Canadian National Rail Road's acquisition of the EJ&E Rail Road. This acquisition will destroy the local environment and ruin the economy of our communities. The State of Illinois and the Chicago metropolitan area can ill afford the negative consequences of this transaction.

The Canadian National has expressed no sincere interest in the environmental and economic needs of the Illinois communities that will be impacted by their operations. In fact, they have been less than cooperative with our local officials and representatives including our officials from Hawthorn Woods, surrounding communities of Lake Zurich and Barrington, and our representatives including Melissa Bean and Barack Obama.

In reviewing the EIS released by the STB, there is just cause for much alarm by all residents, businesses and industries paying property taxes in Hawthorn Woods and the surrounding communities in Lake County. CN should not be allowed to expedite the approval and acquisition processes in advance of the upcoming Presidential inauguration. This matter is of such importance that it should be reviewed by the newly appointed STB members who will be in office to face the consequences of their decision.

The Hawthorn Woods Village Board and surrounding communities, such as the Lake Zurich Area Chamber of Commerce, have gone on record opposing this transaction. And as a resident taxpayer, I strongly oppose this acquisition. Some of my particular reasons are spelled out below:

- Disruptions to various businesses, negative impact on property values and hesitancy to build will impair realization of current and future plans within Hawthorn Woods' Town Center development area.
- Additional delays from a 400% increase in train traffic will negatively impact public, vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Average train lengths of 10,000 feet will block our at-grade crossings and all major arterial roads bringing traffic through downtown to a standstill, including trains that will block both major arteries Gilmer Road and Old McHenry Road simultaneously.

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- The added delay will increase emergency response times resulting in unnecessary loss of life. Ambulances and other emergency responders will have no direct route to a large number of communities in Hawthorn Woods when both Gilmer and Old McHenry roads are blocked.
- The Hawthorn Woods Aquatic Center directly abuts the existing tracks, and increased train traffic and cargo loads present a greater hazard to children and parents at the pool.
- Community School District 95 buses cross the Village's at-grade crossings 233 times per day, which means an increase in train/school bus conflicts.
- The Lake Zurich High School and May Whitney Elementary School directly abut the existing tracks thereby presenting a hazard to students who cross the tracks despite the danger and the warnings.
- This transaction will seriously jeopardize the proposed STAR Line's viability to relieve the region's traffic congestion and air quality.

The STB must require CN to be 100% financially accountable to mitigate all of the adverse public safety and environmental impacts imparted on the effected communities. The STB should not ignore our pleas for full consideration of the mitigation measures stated below:

Land Use and Socioeconomics - It is estimated that home values near the rail line will decrease an average of 20% due to the 400% increase in freight trains. This will make areas planned or approved for residential and other uses no longer viable projects. Our current road infrastructure cannot handle the vehicular traffic congestion created by this large of an increase in rail traffic.

Safety - Greater train frequency through our town will increase the probability of rail related accidents. The installation of barrier walls along the rail adjacent to residential and school property, pedestrian crossing bridges and controlled access points should be provided at no cost to Lake Zurich.

Hazardous Materials Transportation - Local emergency service responders must receive a detailed manifest of all hazardous materials being transported through our communities. Response training, evacuation planning, and response and recovery resources as it relates to the hazards being transported should be provided at no cost to Lake Zurich.

Noise and Vibration - The Quiet Zone currently in place through Lake Zurich and the surrounding areas should be maintained and honored by CN. Additionally CN should contact every property owner residing within 500 feet of the EJ&E tracks to discuss landscape buffers and/or fencing. Noise walls or other types of sound barriers should be built to mitigate sound and prevent egress and ingress onto the railroad right-of-way at no cost to Hawthorn Woods, Lake Zurich, or their residents.

Transportation Systems - The intersections of Gilmer and Midlothian Roads and Midlothian and Old McHenry Roads would experience traffic backing up over the tracks, especially during peak times. Additionally, the intersections in downtown Lake

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Zurich would experience traffic backing up over the tracks, especially during peak times. CN should fund construction of overpasses and/or underpasses. We believe that mitigation for these at grade crossings is appropriate and warranted.

In closing, I would encourage the STB to REJECT the Canadian National Rail Road acquisition of the EJ&E Rail Road given the catastrophic impact it will have in Hawthorn Woods, Lake Zurich, Barrington and all of the affected communities. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Christopher N. George".

Christopher N. George, Esq.
28 West Deerfield Drive
Hawthorn Woods, IL 60047

Other Submissions

In order to process your filing, please fill out the following information. If you do not know the docket number, please leave it blank and we will fill it out for you.

Please fill out the following information to help us complete your filing:

Docket #: -35087 - -

Subject: * Canadian National purchase of EJ&E railroad in Illinois
First Name: * Christopher
Middle Name:
Last Name: * George
Address: * 28 West Deerfield Drive

City: * Hawthorn Woods
State: * Illinois
Zip Code: * 60047-
Email Address: * cngeorge11@hotmail.com
Group/Affiliation: resident

Message: Attached please find a letter voicing my concern and opposition to the proposed purchase of the EJ&E in the northern Chicago suburbs by Canadian National. The safety issues, environmental impact, and increased congestion that would be introduced into the region where people bought homes without expecting this increase is untenable, and CN's proposed infrastructure funding is a pittance compared to the amount that would be necessary to build overpasses, underpasses, etc. to minimize the hazard to this region.