



Environmental Impact Statement

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Canadian National Railway Company Acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway Company

Date: 9-10-08

PLEASE SEND THE TRAINS OUT WEST,
AWAY FROM NEARLY 2 MILLION PEOPLE
IN THE CHICAGO SUBURBS

SEE ATTACHED ARTICLE

PLEASE CARE ON ALL THE LEVELS

Sincerely, Randy Shavit

[illegible]

Matteson

Chicago

Mundelein

Aurora

Barrington

Gary

Bartlett

Joliet

Chicago Tribune

METRO

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U.S. rejects CN's demand

Board says early OK of plan to buy rail line would violate process

By Richard Wronski
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Federal regulators on Monday denied the Canadian National Railway Co.'s demand for early approval of its plan to buy a suburban rail line, a decision likely to draw a fed-

eral court into the proposal to re-route freight trains out of Chicago.

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board said it rejected the railroad's request because it would violate its environmental review process.

The railroad had no immediate comment on the board's decision, but said last month that it was prepared to ask the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington to order the agency to rule on the sale if its request were denied. The company, based in Montreal, wants to buy the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway for

\$300 million.

"We did reserve the right to challenge the decision in court," Jim Kvedaras, a CN vice president, said Monday.

Freight traffic through Chicago and scores of nearby suburbs would be reduced if the purchase is approved, but would sharply increase in dozens of other Chicago-area communities, officials say. The EJ&E runs in a 190-mile arc from Waukegan to Joliet to Gary, Ind.

Citing a Dec. 31 deadline for closing the deal with the EJ&E's owner,

U.S. Steel, CN had asked the board to approve the purchase by Oct. 15 and determine the environmental concerns at a later date.

If it didn't complete the acquisition by December, the railroad said, there was substantial risk that U.S. Steel would terminate the deal.

But the board said its environmental review would not be finished until as early as Dec. 1 or as late as Jan. 31, 2009. The board's decision on the acquisition would fol-

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Tribune photo by Terrence Antonio James

Canadian National Railway Co. is pushing its plan to reroute freight trains out of Chicago.

» RAILROAD

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low as soon as possible after that.

In denying CN's request Monday, the board said that approval of the railroad's bid to buy the local line and the environmental analysis were "two links in the same chain" and needed to be studied together.

"We do not believe that it would be consistent with [federal environmental law] or agency precedent to consider the proposed [acquisition] separately from our environmental review," the board said.

The board's decision came as proponents of CN's plan lined up at a public hearing in Chicago to extol its benefit to residents of the city and to close-in suburbs that have been plagued for years by rail congestion.

At four hearings on the board's draft environmental impact statement two weeks ago, thousands of suburban residents from Barrington to Manhattan voiced opposition. Citing the board's re-

port, critics said the increased freight traffic could hinder emergency responses in some communities and would mean long delays for some motorists stuck at blocked crossings.

Drivers would face long delays at 15 rail crossings in a dozen Chicago-area communities if the deal were approved, according to the environmental impact report. The report also identified 10 suburbs where increased freight traffic could hinder emergency responses.

But at a hearing Monday at Loyola University's downtown campus, two Chicago aldermen, a state representative and two University of Chicago professors joined a coalition of suburbs that back CN's plan.

They accused the board of ignoring parts of the region that would see fewer trains if the sale were approved.

State Rep. Karen Yarbrough, whose 7th District represents Chicago's close-in western suburbs, was among those who said she faulted the board's hearing process for favoring opponents of CN's

plan.

"Please do not tell my constituents that disruption to their lives from train congestion is less important than disruption to the lives of those along the EJ&E," she said at the hearing.

Yarbrough said 59 commuter trains and 40 to 60 freight trains a day pass through Maywood, where she lives. "I have more commuter trains alone passing daily through my village than the total trains the communities on the EJ&E will see in one day," she said.

Ald. Pat Dowell (3rd) criticized the "me-first attitude" of some suburbs that think their interests are more important than the city of Chicago's.

James Foote, a CN vice president, testified that the railway's plan to divert most of the railroad's trains to the lightly used EJ&E tracks would reduce rail and vehicle congestion.

About 60 communities inside the EJ&E's looping arc would benefit, he said.

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