

September 11, 2008

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

Re: 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 Fire chief, serving more than 25,000 residents of Melrose Park, our community would greatly benefit from the reduction of rail congestion. 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. 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. For example, on average it is expected that 24 fewer trains will come through Melrose Park.

Being a leader of public safety in my community, it is imperative that I point out the safety benefits this acquisition will bring to my community as well. 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.

It is important that the greater Chicago area maintain its standing as the transportation hub of North America, 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.

Sincerely,

Richard Beltrame, Fire Chief
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