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Docket #: -35087 -

Subject: * CNR Acquisition of EJ&E
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Chicago was originally located and has thrived because it is a natural transportation focal point. Canals, railroad, highways and airlines have successively chosen Chicago as the logical transportation hub for the central US in general and the Midwest in particular. But rail traffic through Chicago has bogged down in recent years as urban development in the metropolitan region has expanded and filled in.

The \$1.5 billion CREATE project is an acknowledgement of the need for railroad infrastructure improvements to address that problem. It was designed to free up railroad movements within the Chicago area. Unfortunately, progress on CREATE has been hindered by insufficient funding.

But even if CREATE were fully funded and built, its benefits could be greatly magnified by diverting the traffic going through Chicago to pass instead around Chicago. That is precisely what an improved EJ&E can do, and the CNR is eager to upgrade the "J" to achieve that.

The upgrading of the J is a plan to restore the railroad to precisely the role for which it was originally intended. This is a natural use of an existing railroad that will greatly improve the energy efficiency of the national transportation system, produce cost savings and faster freight service to virtually everyone in the US, and significantly improve the surface transportation (rails and roads) within the Chicago region. It will also help to reinforce the strong transportation hub character of Chicago which has been at the heart of the region's growth and successful avoidance of becoming another declining rust belt city.

Whether the CNR buys and upgrades the EJ&E, some other combination of railroads do it, or some government agency steps in to achieve the same improvements, the J should be upgraded to accommodate many more trains at higher speeds than it does now. The upgrade should also be made with the understanding that passenger rail service can also be accommodated on the line whenever commuter rail or intercity rail

service in the corridor become feasible in the future.