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SIERRA CLUB
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January 26, 2008

Charles D. Nottingham
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Suite 1220
Washington, DC 20423-0001

RE: Finance Docket No. 35087, *Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation – Control – EJ&E West Company*

Dear Chairman Nottingham:

We write today to express concern at the risk of increased rail congestion in Chicago due to the above application.

The North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, with 22,000 members in Minnesota, has identified intercity passenger rail as a priority issue, particularly between the Twin Cities and Chicago. That means high-speed rail connection to and from Chicago, and in the meantime no net loss of efficiency in connections for rail passengers in and out of Chicago.

Substantial numbers of passengers using Amtrak's Empire Builder in Minnesota connect to or from other trains originating or terminating at Chicago, including the City of New Orleans, the Saluki, the Illini and Amtrak trains running between Chicago and New York, Washington, D.C., and Boston. To our knowledge, no alternative routing of equal or better utility has yet been assured to compensate for CN's intended abandonment of the St. Charles Air Line.

Several projects necessary for current or better passenger service levels if the St. Charles Air Line is abandoned are noted in CN's application to be "in question" and/or years away due to "funding uncertainties." These include a new connection at Grand Crossing, access from south of Grand Crossing and expansion of capacity on Norfolk-Southern to handle increased traffic if the St. Charles Air Line is abandoned. Rather than argue for immediate approval of CN's application, these yet-to-be accomplished projects in fact argue for modification of CN's application to ensure they go forward as *a condition* of the St. Charles Air Line abandonment.

We believe our members who use the Empire Builder, and STB's responsibilities in this case, will be best served if STB makes funding, and binding scheduling, of the above projects a condition of CN's acquisition of EJ&E.

Sincerely,

Transportation Chair
North Star Chapter, Sierra Club

Surface Transportation Board
CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087
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