

Citizen Comment to Canadian National Acquisition of EJ&E Railroad
and the DEIS Issued Relative to that Acquisition

August 27, 2008

As residents of the Village of Barrington, Illinois, we are astounded and appalled at the cavalier attitude toward the communities that will be destroyed by CN's proposed acquisition, as reflected in the numerous flaws contained in the STB's DEIS. The level at which the realities of the effects on Barrington, and other communities, are ignored by the STB is shocking.

Perhaps most shocking is the utter lack of concern for, or understanding of, the serious public safety impacts. As explained in our previous comments, we live about 1 mile, if even, from the Barrington Public Safety Building, one street north of the intersection of Rt. 59 and Rt. 14. The quickest route to our house would be Rt. 14, which unbelievably is not one of the grade crossings that the DEIS states might require mitigation (that finding is laughable at best). However, we are on the opposite side of the EJ&E tracks from the Public Safety Building. If something were to happen at our house, or one of our neighbors', or one of the many, many people that live in the neighborhoods near ours, the extra minutes that it would take to travel further south away from our house in order to then use Rt. 59 and the hypothetical mitigation that might be there someday because the STB has decided that Rt. 59 would require mitigation, will be minutes that make the probable outcome death rather than life. Our understanding is that the STB has suggested that perhaps police and fire stations may need to be moved. Where? To the other side of the tracks?!!!! That suggestion is as laughable as the notion that Rt. 59 in Barrington would require mitigation but not Rt. 14. Also shocking, but definitely not laughable given the complete disregard for human life, is the SEA's conclusion that getting an ambulance to an emergency scene is far more important than also getting the patient to a hospital in a timely manner, such that getting a patient in an ambulance to a hospital quickly is not a "critical action." That conclusion is unbelievable and inhumane, and belies the fact that there is any sort of rational analysis going on here at all.

As to the STB's analysis of the potential for vehicular delays at grade crossings, it appears that clearly the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) count at grade crossings have been seriously undercounted by the SEA and that the counts taken by the affected communities have been ignored. That the DEIS lists only 15 grade crossings all along the EJ&E in the many affected communities that would need mitigation in itself reveals the folly of that number. Moreover, the train lengths and speeds relied upon by SEA were provided by CN and are highly questionable at the least. The speeds used do not reflect the slower speeds that are currently the norm on the line, nor do they take into account that CN trains will not be the only trains traveling this line. The undercounted ADT's, artificially short train lengths and artificially high train speeds have led to an extremely low, much too low, number of grade crossings being marked as requiring mitigation.

The DEIS also ignores the realities of the economic impact upon the communities that CN intends to destroy. Clearly, not only homes within 250 feet of the EJ&E will experience a decrease in property value. The DEIS reads as though home values are assessed in a vacuum – we find it hard to believe the members of the STB really believe that only homes within 250 feet could experience any sort of decline in property value. We all know that is not the way things work in reality . . . but it would appear the STB has suspended much of reality in this DEIS. Obviously, there is a domino effect that occurs whenever property values are involved. In Barrington, if the EJ&E purchased is approved and CN runs 20 trains a day through Barrington with mitigation only at Rt. 59 (or for that matter, even with mitigation at Rt. 59, Rt. 14 and Lake Cook Rd.), the downtown Barrington businesses will die as a result of it being extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get downtown - downtown Barrington will become a ghost town and many jobs will be lost. That will decrease our property values, and all property values within the village, despite a distance of more than 250 feet from the line. And as the commercial and residential tax base decreases, so will the fiscal health of the schools, which will result in a declining school system, which results in even lower property values. We all know this is a self-perpetuating, vicious cycle that has played itself out over numerous decades in too many American small towns to count. It will happen not only in Barrington, but in all the other communities along the line that are going to be affected by this transaction. Why do you want to destroy wonderful, thriving small towns in Illinois simply to make it easier for a foreign corporation to make greater profits? It makes no sense.

Also making zero sense is the position of the STB taken in the DEIS that the very taxpayers whose lives will be affected to their detriment by CN's acquisition of the EJ&E must also bear the lion's share of any mitigation. That is inconceivable and untenable. The corporation that is going to realize greater profits by this deal should bear the greatest weight of the mitigation costs. Grade separations at Rts. 14 and 59 and Lake Cook Road in Barrington could cost up to \$100 million each. IDOT and the ICC have definitively state that Illinois is in no position to fund *any* needed grade crossing that would result from approval of the CN purchase. And your DEIS suggests, once again laughably, that CN should pay from 5% to 50% of *all* needed mitigation (there's quite a bit to laugh at in the DEIS if this were not such a serious matter). That's quite a range with quite a low end. This conclusion as to the ridiculously broad range of mitigation CN should be required to provide was done without even investigating whether there are federal, state, and local taxpayer funded resources available to make up the difference. The DEIS completely fails to take into account government fiscal realities. Instead, it seems you want us to fund the very thing which is going to destroy our quality of life, our property values and, quite possibly in an emergency, actually take someone's life.

The DEIS concludes that the benefits from CN's purchase of the EJ&E to communities already on CN rail lines will outweigh the harm done to communities along the EJ&E. This conclusion is reached without any real analysis and appears merely to be a result of a finding that there will essentially be only a shift in traffic and that that must be of benefit. However, there is no account taken of the fact that it is reasonably foreseeable

that the negative impacts will not only be shifted from certain communities to other, but that they will in fact be compounded throughout the region.

In conclusion, the DEIS is grossly flawed and does not take a realistic approach to analyzing the adverse impact the increased freight traffic will have on the affected communities. These comments reflect only a very small number of the DEIS shortcomings – we had neither the time nor the ability to list them all.

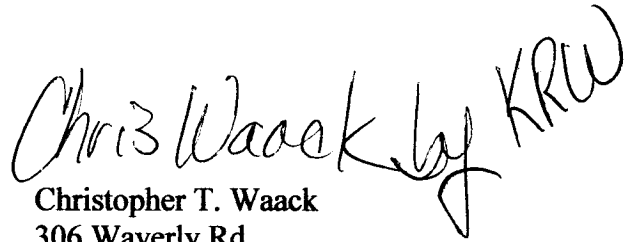
This purchase simply cannot be approved as it stands.

Sincerely,



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