

Friends of GARY/CHICAGO AIRPORT

February 5, 2008

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423
Attention: Phillis Johnson-Ball
Environmental Filing
STB Finance Docket No. 3508

The Friends of the Gary Chicago Airport is an advocacy organization devoted to the development and expansion of the Gary Chicago Airport located in Gary, Indiana. We have been closely following Canadian National's effort to acquire the EJ & E Railway and applaud those efforts to improve rail infrastructure and bring economic benefit to our region.

However, we are concerned because:

- The Master Plan for expansion approved by the FAA to extend the runway could be in jeopardy since the runway expansion is in direct conflict with the EJ & E rail lines, and Canadian National does not have an agreement in place with the airport.
- The FAA approved the Letter of Intent in 2005, which provided a significant amount of funding for the runway expansion project (\$58 million). In addition, the State of Indiana has provided (\$20 million) dollars in matching funds. The FAA has indicated that the LOI funding could be jeopardized if the project is not completed within the next few years.

As an advocacy group we have been an effective lobbying organization at the local, state and federal level. We have an email list of over 2000 "Friends" who are supporters of the airport and who understand the benefits of the expansion, not only to the local surrounding community but to the entire region of Northwest Indiana. Governor Mitch Daniels and Congressman Peter Visclosky have both recognized the airport as the "greatest economic development engine" that Northwest Indiana has.

The expected economic impact of expansion at the airport has been projected to be \$5 billion in the next 20 years. In addition, the expansion at the airport will directly impact the over crowding at both O'Hare and Midway airports, placing the airport in a position to become Chicago's third major airport.

We are aware that the airport and Canadian National Railroad continue to hold meetings to discuss alternatives; however we are in **opposition** to Canadian National's purchase of EJ & E Railroad until an agreement is signed between the Gary Chicago Airport Authority and Canadian National Railroad. **This agreement should clearly indicate that the railroad tracks located at the end of Runway 30 would be relocated to improve safety and security at the airport.**

Sincerely,

Gayle Van Sessen
Gayle Van Sessen
President

Cc:

Chris Curry, Airport Director
Wil Davis, Gary Jet Center
Leigh Morris, RDA
John Swanson, NIRPC
Vince Galbiati, NWI Forum
Spero Batistatos, Lake County Visitor's Bureau

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