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February 15, 2008

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Attn: Phillis Johnson-Ball
Environmental Filing
STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

As a former Mayor (1993-2001) of the Village of Barrington, I feel obligated to comment on the proposed purchase of the EJ&E Railway by the Canadian National Railway.

As has probably already been pointed by other letter writers, there are 5 at grade level crossings of the EJ&E tracks in the Village of Barrington, including 3 on major streets including US Highway 14 and Illinois Highway 59. It is my understanding that 4 to 5 times as many freight trains, including some as long as a mile or more, will go through the Village of Barrington as at present. My concern regards several issues adversely affecting the people of the area if the CN Railway does not make sufficient changes to improve the safety issues facing us in the community if the acquisition goes through, such as at least raising or lowering the crossings.

First, there are a few hundred school buses crossing the EJ&E tracks every school day, which cannot be changed due to the 90 square mile Barrington Consolidated School District 200's high school being on one side of the tracks and the two middle schools being on the other side of the tracks.

Various businesses in downtown Barrington have told me that they cannot remain in their businesses at their current locations if the proposed acquisition goes through, due to the frequent delays in customers being able to access their businesses, caused by freight trains more frequently crossing the downtown EJ&E tracks.

Some of the first complaints I received from citizens of Barrington who lived near the EJ&E tracks were about the train whistles blaring during the hours of 2 to 5 AM. How many more of this will occur if the CN increases the volume of freight trains per day?

February 15, 2008
Surface Transportation Board
Page 2

Finally and most importantly, I am concerned about the public health and safety issues related to this matter. As I have already indicated, there are three EJ&E crossings in downtown Barrington. The Village's Public Safety Building with ambulances and fire engines are on one side of the tracks.

I believe that representatives of the community's medical profession have already submitted statements regarding the urgency of getting medical attention to persons suffering from heart attacks and other life threatening illnesses. My wife and I are fortunate to live on the side where the Public Safety Building is located. However, Barrington's Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital is a few miles on the other side of those tracks. The people living on the hospital side of the tracks may not get an ambulance with paramedics in time to save their lives. Likewise, fire engines will be unnecessarily delayed in reaching burning homes on the other side of the tracks.

In an article on the subject of the Canadian National's proposed acquisition of the EJ&E in the February 13 edition of the Chicago Tribune, E. Hunter Harrison, President of the CN, is quoted on his criticism of Barrington's position on this matter. He states that suburbs like Barrington are taking a "selfish position" without entering talks with the railroad, and that "clearly, Barrington is the most radical, the most vocal, the most arbitrary."

I had the opportunity to attend the hearing held by the Surface Transportation Board in Barrington on this issue on January 9, 2008. I appreciated the chance to speak with one of your representatives regarding my concerns. Although I did not speak with the CN representatives there, another person who did shared with me the CN representative's reply to the matter of ambulances not being able to get to Good shepherd Hospital - that those so affected should go to another hospital. Is that an appropriate response to someone "talking with the railroad?"

In closing, I ask that you seriously consider the concerns expressed by the citizens of the Barrington community on this matter. As a retired CPA, I can appreciate the importance of interstate commerce. However, I also believe that that should not be at the risk to citizens' public health and safety. If this acquisition is approved, the CN should be required to finance what is necessary to alleviate the problem, e.g., raising or lowering the grade crossings.

Sincerely Yours,



Ronald M. Hamelberg

Surface Transportation Board

CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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