

Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

10343

519 Aberdeen Road
Frankfort, IL 60423

August 25, 2008

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball,

Reference: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) associated with the above Docket, which relates to the proposed purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad Company by the Applicant, the Canadian National Railroad Company a Grand Trunk Corporation. *and*

My conclusion is that the DEIS is deficient, especially in the area of mitigation.

There are many areas to comment upon, but I will concentrate on mitigation of noise, congestion, and added danger associated with many of the 133 grade level crossings. This is a personal issue for us since we live very close to the grade crossing at Harlem Avenue (Illinois Route 43) in Frankfort, IL. The street where we live, Aberdeen Road, runs just north of the tracks and only has an entrance/exit at Harlem; this intersection is very close to the grade crossing. Currently, when a train is in the crossing, traffic backs up on Harlem and we cannot exit or enter Aberdeen. Currently, with only a few trains a day of moderate length, this is a tolerable delay and the chance of delaying emergency vehicles is small. However, with 28 or more much longer trains each day, as proposed by the Applicant, waits will be much longer, increasing substantially the probability that emergency vehicles will be delayed, not to mention the frustration we and our neighbors will experience in entering and exiting our street. Another personal issue is the increased noise level, especially, for us, from the horn that is sounded each time a train approaches the crossing. Currently, this happens a couple of times a night; although the horn is loud and often awakens us, the noise is infrequent and tolerable. However, adequate sleep will definitely be a problem for us if traffic is substantially increased, as proposed by the Applicant.

For my wife and me, as well as many thousands of others, the issue boils down to what will be done to mitigate the problems at the grade crossings. The only really effective remedy is to replace many of the grade crossings with underpasses or overpasses. We were amazed to learn that of the 133 grade crossings, the DEIS concludes that only 15 will need grade separations. We noted, with great concern, that the grade crossing near us was not one of the 15. We are not experts in this field, but we are certain that having only 15 grade separations is far too few; it does not pass the common sense test. Adding insult to injury, the DEIS states that the Applicant will only have to pay a small fraction (5-50%) of the cost of these 15 grade separations. As reported by the Chicago Tribune on February

13, 2008, E. Hunter Harrison, Canadian National Railroad President, said, "...the bulk of the cost [of mitigation] will have to come from federal and state governments." Amazing! American taxpayers are expected to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to subsidize a foreign company that had a two billion dollar profit last year. This violates the fairness test, as well as the common sense test. Moreover, any Illinois citizen knows that this magnitude of public funding is a pipe dream in a state experiencing a financial crisis.

STB Commissioner Douglas Buttrey has summed up the situation eloquently in a recent statement: "...based on what I see now on the record, and what I saw when I recently visited the affected communities, it is hard for me to imagine how even the most far-reaching mitigation measures would be enough to offset or balance the environmental detriments that would flow from this proposal." I agree!

Sincerely,

William A. Goodwin
William A. Goodwin