

Phillis Johnson-Ball
 STB Finance Docket No. 35087
 Surface Transportation Board
 395 E Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20423-0001

Thank you for opening public hearings and accepting comments on the recently released DEIS. I do not believe the DEIS adequately measures and anticipates the drastic changes that are to occur if this transaction is approved, nor does it propose the mitigation necessary to maintain a safe community. I do not feel that the STB is at all looking out for the citizens of our country, but instead leaning toward the needs and wishes of an international rail carrier who cannot wait to take advantage of this acquisition. Too much of the basis of your decisions are based on very biased statements and studies prepared either by or for the CN. Of course they are going to give "facts" that support their desire to turn our communities into rail super highways.

I have read summaries of the DEIS and have additional comments and requests for clarification as follows:

1. The DEIS states that there are only "15 highway/rail grade crossings...that require mitigation", and that the CN only pay 5%-50% of these costs. This is a gross underestimation of the number of highly used roadways that will suffer in traffic backups and potential accidents. Barrington alone has 3 road/rail crossings that are major thoroughfares for commuting that are already subject to delays from rail traffic. A mandate to pay 5%-50% of the costs is ridiculous. IDOT already states there is no funding available to put towards changing any of the affected grade crossings. Taxpayers are already strapped and unable to come up with the remaining 50%-95% of expected costs. This is completely unrealistic to expect the American taxpayer to finance a foreign railroad's path to huge profits. If these recommendations are to become official, please mandate that CN may not increase freight operations until after these grade separations are fully funded and constructed.
2. The DEIS states that we should not expect more that the current estimated increase in trains because this preliminary estimate will place the track at capacity. That is an extremely naïve statement when noting that CN is boasting the great increase in containers to transport from the Port of Prince Rupert and that Chicago alone is predicting a continued yearly growth of railroad freight. The CN is already allocating money to double track certain areas. It will not be long before the entire line is double tracked and the traffic doubles. I do not believe the CN has been honest in revealing its business plan. They have already dubbed themselves the "Midwest Express" and boast of the number of containers to push thru Chicago and Memphis for distribution in the US and Mexico. Please push for more disclosure of the future plans for growth.
3. The DEIS concludes that the benefits of decreasing traffic in other communities in the Chicago area and current CN rail areas is more important than the effects to occur on the current EJ&E corridor after this transaction. As stated in my point

#3, it is terribly unrealistic to believe this “relief” will be anything but short term as the traffic from increased intermodal shipments from the Port of Prince Rupert and inherent growth of rail business in the greater Chicago area will have to return a large amount of traffic to these lines. The people living in the current high traffic areas are most likely being given false hope, thus unfounded support of this transaction. There is no proof that there will be any long term benefit to these communities. This should not be used as an argument towards approving the CN purchase.

4. The DEIS urges impacted communities to negotiate directly with the CN to reach mitigation agreements. The CN has shown nothing but complete disregard and disrespect for IDOT, Metra, STAR, CREATE, TRAC and all authorities questioning the viability of the communities and transportation modalities affected by this transaction. CN has publicly stated they don’t believe they have any obligation to add financial aid to the mitigation. They have called us “whining” and “selfish” communities for looking out for our futures. They obviously have no desire to help us to maintain any semblance of our current quality of life. Leaving our communities to negotiate on our own will only lead to CN literally railroading our towns. The recommended mitigation needs to be more fairly allotted and mandated by the STB, not just recommended.
5. The significant changes our fire and EMS services will see is not receiving the importance it deserves in the DEIS. A train blocking a crossing may delay emergency services by 2-10 minutes. This is absolutely life and death and deserves more attention! During this time, someone in cardiac arrest will lose hope for meaningful recovery, a person in respiratory distress may progress to cardiac arrest, and a home or business could be completely engulfed in flames. I am a critical nurse, so I know how distressful it is to watch someone whose heart is fibrillating, who is suffocating to death because they can’t get air to breath, to bleed to death. Add that to the sound of sirens that just cant get to you and you are describing torture! The DEIS note that “response to the actual scene of an emergency is the most critical action, not the transport to the nearest emergency facility” can be argued by any professional medical association. Please check modern recommendations for heart attack and stroke...they all push for early hospital intervention. “Time is muscle” (heart) and “Time is Brain” (Stroke). Only early hospital intervention can provide the revascularization that will improve the final outcome for these patients. Our safety needs are being minimized and deserve greater respect and mitigation.
6. Residential housing impacts are ignored. The DEIS says the decrease in property values would see “only minor, negligible effects” to homes “within 250 feet of the line”. This is completely disrespectful to anyone within one mile of the tracks. Our homes are our most important investment and deserve more notice than “minor, negligible effects.” My home is approximately 400ft from the tracks and I fully believe there is no way to maintain home values. Only property values are mentioned; what about the increased noise, pollution, and vibration? The estimate of 250 feet is a grossly low benchmark for this assumption. There is no mention of how many homes are within this distance. The number of homes within this distance, or preferably a larger distance, need to be accounted for to

truly see the economic impact of decreased property values. The village as a whole will encounter decreased property values as the town becomes unmanageable to drive in, noisy and polluted.

7. The previously mentioned decrease in property values leads to further problems with the true economic impact from this transaction.. The DEIS only discusses business losses due to job loss within the rail industry. As the towns become gridlocked with traffic the local businesses will see a great loss in consumers and either have to close or leave town. The tax burden will be greater on the homeowners. The lack of tax income will then filter down to see disastrous consequences to schools, park districts, libraries, forest preserves and emergency services. The very things that make a quality community will disappear and the communities will be decimated.
8. CN's terrible safety record was noted by me personally and by many others in the scoping process, yet no attention was brought to that in the DEIS despite admitting that there will be increased risk of hazmat spills. The Canadian government has reported on and scrutinized the CN for their safety record. Why are there no recommendations to improve safety in the DEIS? Why should a foreign railroad be allowed to arrogantly come thru our towns without mandating absolute minimum safety standards? The total number of train accidents on the EJ&E tracks is projected to increase by 28%. Many of the previous accidents documented with the CN were totally preventable, yet the CN has made no changes in how it handles their safety. If their own government is saying they have been deficient in handling safety issues, why is the STB not doing something to rectify this?

We love the Barrington community and are very proud of the services it has to offer. The acquisition of the EJ&E by the CN promises nothing but destruction of our quality of life. Their complete arrogance and disrespect in all dealings so far shows us this is not a company that wants to a "business partner" with our community. The fact that they are pushing the STB for a rushed decision and threatening litigation prove they also don't have any respect for our federal processes. Please do not allow them to push you to do what they only want. This is not a company that the United States should want as a "business partner" either. Please help us to protect our community's future and set a precedent that our citizens have as many rights as big business.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Respectfully,



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