

Date: January 9, 2008
To: Surface Transportation Board
Re: Proposed Sale of Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Rail Line to Canadian National Railway Company
From: Barbara Pintozzi, Barrington Area Library Trustee

On behalf of the Barrington Area Library (Library), I hereby present the impact of the proposed sale on the Library and its patrons.

Background

The Library's mission is to "stimulate[] imagination," "develop[] information fluency," "foster[] lifelong learning," and "create[] young readers" all "in comfortable physical and virtual settings." The Library's one building draws its patrons from all or part of 14 communities, covering 74 square miles, averaging 24,000 patron visits per month over the past year, making it the most trafficked building in the Village of Barrington. In addition to those arriving by motor vehicle, many patrons arrive as pedestrians or ride bicycles. Recently, BusinessWeek rated Barrington as among the top 25 places to raise children. The Library, through its many cultural activities and programs for children, contributed to that rating.

The Library is situated on the east side of Route 14. The Library's entrance drive is approximately 850 feet south of the crossing of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E) rail line and Route 14. Although the current building is approximately 1,500 feet from that crossing, approximately 1,700 feet from the Lake Zurich Road railway crossing, and less than 1,200 feet from the rail line, the Library intends to construct an addition in the near future. Following construction, the children's wing will be less than 1,000 feet from the rail line. See attached exhibits.

Each summer, the Library holds free outdoor activities for children on its property, including storytimes and holds storytimes at Citizens' Park and Langendorf Park in the Village of Barrington. Last year, over 70 children participated in these programs.

Concerns

The Library is concerned that if Canadian National Railway Company's (CN's) purchase of the EJ&E line is approved, and CN increases the number of freight trains from the current level of 3 to 5 a day to 15 or more a day, the Library's mission will be thwarted.

A. Train Noise

The major concern with an increase in freight train traffic is the noise from train whistles. Train whistles sounded approaching nearby crossings are clearly audible within the Library's building in areas used by patrons, and even more so outside on its grounds. The impact of this noise will be even more detrimental to outdoor storytime programs at Citizens' Park and Langendorf Park, both of which abut the rail line. A secondary concern is with the noise generated by the locomotives and freight cars themselves. These sounds can be heard clearly on the Library's property and well beyond, even inside of buildings. Such noise is not only disturbing to Library patrons, but to area residents as well.

ATTACHED

B. Pollution

The Library is concerned about the increased pollution that will be generated as a result of increased freight train traffic. First, increased freight train traffic will snarl traffic throughout Barrington, but more particularly, will cause severe motor vehicle congestion on Route 14 in front of the Library. While these vehicles wait for the trains to pass, and then for the traffic to begin moving, the idling motors will emit pollution from the vehicles' exhaust. In addition, increased freight train traffic will increase the amount of pollution caused by the train locomotives themselves. Already the Chicago area experiences several Ozone Action Days per summer, in which the young, the elderly, and those with pulmonary problems or asthma are told to remain indoors. This situation will only be exacerbated by allowing freight train traffic to increase.

C. Inability of Patrons to Reach the Library

The Library is concerned that traffic backups, caused by frequent freight trains, will prevent patrons from reaching the Library's property timely or conveniently. The Library offers patrons many programs, from computer classes to musical performances. The Library fears that many patrons will be prevented from arriving at such programs timely and will therefore be denied the benefit of such programs.

Alternatives

- A. It would be most beneficial to the Library and the Barrington community as a whole if the purchase of the EJ&E line was not permitted.
- B. Barring that, the Library urges the creation of a "quiet zone" stretching from Ela Road on the east to Otis Road on the west. As part of this quiet zone, CN should be required to construct grade separated crossings at Route 14, Route 59 (Hough Street), and Main Street (Lake Cook Road), at the minimum. CN should also be required to upgrade the remaining at-grade crossings so that they qualify for exemption from the Federal train whistle sounding requirements. The grade-separated crossings would eliminate the traffic backups on Route 14 which would prevent patrons' vehicles from accessing or egressing from the Library and the concomitant pollution from automobile exhaust from idling engines. The quiet zone would foster the Library's mission by ensuring a quiet, comfortable environment at the Library.
- C. In addition to the quiet zone, the Library also requests that CN be barred from running more than 7 trains per day, and that those trains be permitted only during the evening and nighttime hours, to reduce air pollution and freight car and locomotive noise during the hours of Library operations.

Allowing CN's purchase to proceed without serious restrictions will harm the health and welfare of Barrington's children and negatively impact the Library's mission. For further information, call the Library at (847)382-1300, or visit the Library's website at www.barringtonarealibrary.org.