

Members of the Surface Transportation Board;

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I have spent the last few weeks gathering information regarding the proposed purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E) railroad line by the Canadian National Railroad company (CN).

What becomes immediately obvious from reading the documents posted on your web site is that on one side of the coin, the municipalities and businesses that currently have the problem with railroad traffic, noise, congestion, air pollution and safety, are more than willing to say, do, or support anything that will improve their existing situation. What they fail to realize is that in the near future, CN is projecting 80% growth in railroad traffic on all their existing lines, making their situation just as bad if not worse than before.

On the other side of the coin are the residents and businesses who oppose these problems for the exact same opposite reasons.

From an historical perspective the EJ&E railroad line was built in 1893 and purchased by U.S. Steel Company around the turn of the century, making it 114 years old. One hundred and fourteen years ago this railroad line was surely the outer loop around the city of Chicago without much concern for grade crossings, traffic congestion, air pollution and noise.

A lot of changes have since ensued. The population of the Chicago land area has increased substantially. This alone in itself has caused many surface transportation problems. It was not that long ago, that major automobile intersections, were once country roads with very little congestion and four way stop signs.

Many of today's suburban residents grew up in the city, and over time migrated to the suburbs as a means to avoid traffic, noise, congestion and pollution.

I have seen a lot of changes in my lifetime, some good, and some bad. Railroads existed long before automobiles, air planes, radios, TV's, phones, etc... However, railroad technology has not kept pace with other technological advances made during the same 114 years.

If trains did not cause traffic congestion, if trains were not so noisy, if trains did not have a whistle that could be heard for miles away in the middle of the night, then maybe the local residents and businesses would not find them as objectionable.

My home is located near the EJ&E tracks. When I first moved here twelve years ago we had one train early in the morning and one train late at night. This was tolerable, and in fact gives the neighborhood a little character. A few years ago, railroad traffic was

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increased to 5 / 6 trains per day. This increase in railroad traffic has not had a good effect upon residents who live near the railroad line.

Any additional increase in railroad traffic will have detrimental side effects such as;

- 1) Increased automobile traffic congestion.
- 2) Increased automobile related crossing safety.
- 3) Increased noise pollution.
- 4) Decreased air quality.
- 5) Decreased property values.
- 6) Increased difficulty in the sale of your home.

We need to determine what's important, and what our priorities are. Are box cars more important than people? I would certainly hope not. A freight train bypassing the Chicago land area saves the CN railway 4 hours in transit time. But this proposed increase of twenty plus trains per day at 133 railroad grade crossings will have a detrimental affect upon local productivity and businesses.

Assume one train takes 5 minutes to clear a crossing, and on average there are twelve automobiles affected (6 in each direction). This causes a combined one hour delay for each crossing. Multiply this time by 133 crossings, causes a loss of 16.6 working man days per train. This doesn't take into account the amount of gasoline that would be wasted idling waiting for the train to clear the crossing. This likewise causes increase automobile emissions in addition to the pollution caused by the train. People when frustrated make mistakes and this is not a good thing when a driver tries to beat the train at the crossing. Train technology is extremely noisy, you have combined engine, rail, whistle, and grade crossing noise.

Lastly, property values which have substantially decreased over the past couple of years will now be subjected to an additional decrease because no one would find living next to a noisy major railroad transportation line very desirable.

In our immediate area we already have to contend with a natural geographical barrier in the form of the Fox River. Substantial growth expansion on the West side of the river has caused major commuting problems caused by too few river crossings. If increased railroad traffic is allowed, commuters will be subjected to both problems. Major delays caused by too few bridges and increased railroad traffic at grade crossings.

The town of Barrington will become grid locked. Recently it has taken ½ hour to commute through downtown Barrington. This is already a bad situation and increased railroad traffic will only compound the problem, making a bad situation worse.

Besides the 133 at grade automobile crossings there are several rail to rail crossings. There are two in our area, one just south of Lake Street (US20), and the other near downtown Barrington. These at grade rail to rail crossings, with increased railroad traffic will cause additional major railroad delays on **all** railroad lines that they cross giving raise to additional safety concerns.

At the Barrington Surface Transportation Board meeting held of 12/9/2007 over 1600 residents attended in opposition to this proposed purchase. I wasn't able to attend the meeting but I'm in total support of their objections.

I'm requesting that this proposed purchase be rejected. What is required is a major regional comprehensive rail transportation plan utilizing today's technology, not some plan where the Canadian National tries to improve their transportation problems in a piece meal approach on a railroad line that was created 114 years ago, and there by shifting their problem onto the residents and businesses of the surrounding area. The harm to the residents and businesses will far exceed any benefit gained by a private foreign company.

CN, which made two billion in profit last year, has made public statements, and placed newspaper ads, stating that they are willing to work with the effected residents and businesses to resolve problems caused by their proposal. This has not happened, and appears only to be propaganda from their PR department. Their CEO is on record as being a real railroad'n man, with his main focus on getting freight trains, **not people**, from point A to point B.

People are more important than freight trains.

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