

16723

September 26, 2008

Phillis Johnson-Ball

Surface Transportation Board

395 E Street, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20423

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball,

This letter pertains to the Draft EIS for docket number FD 35087 Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Truck Corporation – Control- EJ&E West Company. My comments on the DEIS are as follows:

No alternatives to the CN acquisition seemed to be reviewed. Was CREATE reviewed or analyzed?

The noise assessment appears to be outdated. Construction noise also needs to be addressed. It appears that 19 miles of new tracks will be added if CN acquires the EJ&E. Many of this construction will be very near to homes, schools and parks. How will CN be held accountable for keeping the construction noise at an acceptable level?

The cities of Naperville and Aurora are in the Approval Stages for a Quiet Zone that plans to be enacted by November 2008. The Final EIS needs to ensure that this quiet zone is honored.

Emergency Services Response Time will be greatly delayed. A sensitive receptor, Rush Copley Hospital on Route 34 constantly uses the at grade crossing on Route 34 for emergency vehicles. The first responder impacts appear to be seriously down played.

The DEIS does not properly list the substantially affected at grade crossings since the vehicle count is incorrect. For example, at Haffenrichter Street in Aurora the traffic count appears to be off by 300%.

The DEIS did not incorporate the negative environmental impact of emissions as vehicles idle as they wait for trains to pass (especially when trains are predicted to be up to 2 miles long).

The DEIS assumes that traffic will free flow once the train has passed. The DEIS did not take into account the bottle neck that will occur at busy at grade crossings such as Ogden Road in Aurora.

The DEIS minimizes the disruption of current Metra rail operations.

The Village of Plainfield will be crippled by the anticipated increase of traffic. Plainfield has a total of 17 crossing and 16 of them are at-grade crossings. The FEIS needs to realize the vast negative impact that the CN purchase will have on villages like Plainfield that do not have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate 2 mile long trains passing by 42 times a day.

Indian Prairie School District 204 transports 17,500 students each day. The EJ&E tracks run through more than 11 miles of this district. Seven schools (sensitive receptors) are located within a half mile of the tracks. There are two grade-level crossings of particular concern. School buses cross the Ogden Avenue tracks a total of 164 times each day and the Montgomery Avenue tracks 139 times each day. Gate closures are anticipated to increase up to 10 minutes per train. Delays created by rail traffic will force students to ride on the buses longer and cost our district more money to run the buses for a longer time. Buses will pollute our environment as they idle waiting for trains to cross. Please incorporate this pollution count into your FEIS.

Peterson Elementary School in District 204, 4008 Chinaberry Lane, Naperville, IL (between 111th and 103rd) is one of the sensitive receptors. Hazardous materials will be transported on an average of one per day through residential neighborhoods and very close to Peterson School. For the safety of our children, is it possible NOT to transport hazardous material while they are in school? It appears that the plans are to add a THIRD track near Peterson Elementary School for storage. Why is CN allowed to store their trains so close to an elementary school? What are the plans for construction noise, storage, and switching? What is being done to ensure that our children are safe and that their school and playground is not polluted? The construction noise of the additional track appears that it will be above acceptable levels. What is being done to correct this? Could construction be done at time when our children are not in school? Could construction be done at a time when residents are not sleeping?

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The DEIS only projects out for 3 years. The Final EIS needs to extend to 2015. There is anticipated growth in our communities and this must be included in the Final EIS to have a more accurate understanding of the true impact. Did the draft EIS address full capacity line or just current CN shipments being moved to the EJ&E line? What will prevent CN from increasing shipments?

The planned commuter STAR line will likely no longer be feasible. Naperville/Plainfield already purchased approximately 100 acres for the STAR line. Why isn't anything written in the DEIS to ensure that CN allows the STAR line to co-exist with them in the future? There is no real assurance that CN will help implement the STAR line. If CN is operating the tracks at capacity, how will the STAR line be able to use these tracks?

The DEIS fails to suggest how the communities along the 200 miles of tracks are going to pay for the necessary crossing improvements. In Aurora alone, it is estimated that it will cost \$120-\$180 million to mitigate traffic. The busy at-grade crossing at Ogden is estimated to cost \$50-\$55 million alone. IDOT does not have currently have the funds. How are we going to fund this?

The purchase price for CN is \$300 Million. The true cost to the region is estimated at \$1.8 - \$2 Billion. The negative environmental impact that this type of financial drain will have on our region is devastating.

Along the EJ&E line, about 20% of the land is residential and 20% consists of parks and preserves. The 62 mile Prairie Path will be greatly disrupted. It is predicted that four species will suffer habitat loss if the CN purchase is allowed. The negative environmental impact of our parks and preserves was greatly down played in the DEIS.

Home values will likely decrease. The DEIS simply stated that "home value within 250 feet of the tracks will experience a decrease in home value." Why weren't they further analyzed and this analysis made a part of the DEIS?

The "benefits to the region" were not outlined in the DEIS and nothing holds CN accountable for long term guarantees that traffic on the current tracks will not increase at a later date.

Please address these issues and study the true negative impact that the CN acquisition will have.

Respectfully Submitted,



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