

January 14, 2008

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

Surface Transportation Board

CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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HDR

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed acquisition by CN of the EJ&E rail line and the increased freight traffic that they intend to run on that line. I attended the STB scoping meeting on January 9th in Barrington and registered my comments. However, I would like to more intricately express my comments in writing.

I am deeply concerned about the negative impact an increase in freight traffic will have on the Barrington community, environment, and overall quality of life. I am specifically concerned about the safety of the rail crossings for school children that must cross this line multiple times a day to go to and from almost all of Barrington's schools (grade school through high school).

As you may well know, once of the worst commuter train accidents occurred very close to Barrington on October 25, 1995 in Fox River Grove. The accident occurred when a school bus was attempting to cross the Metra Northwest rail line to Rout 14. (both Route 14 and the rail line run through downtown Barrington and intersect the EJ&E rail line). A commuter train struck the school bus resulting in the deaths of 7 children. The NTSB later ruled the accident to be the result of inadequate crossing signs and signal timing.

While this Metra line has fixed some of its faulty crossings, these types of accidents still continue to happen. This fall a teenager was struck in his car on the same line in Barrington. If these types of accidents can occur on some of the best signaled and safest rail lines, I cannot imagine what ~~could happen on the very poorly marked and laid out EJ&E lines. Accidents and deaths as a result~~ of the proposed increase in freight traffic is not a matter of if, it will be when and how many. It is an inevitability.

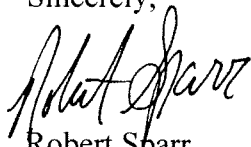
An increase in traffic volume on this line will have an enormous impact on my quality of life and that of my family. Recently Barrington had invested 14 million dollars to construct Citizen's Park with one of the first handicap friendly tree houses in the United States. This park sits directly along side the EJ&E line. Not only do I have to cross the EJ&E line to get to the park, but with an increase in volume, I am very worried about those children who are left unattended at the park and will eventually find their way towards the tracks to play. Kids are naturally fascinated with trains and having this proximity to a natural play area will spell disaster.

While a decline in property values will most definitely effect those who live closest the EJ&E line, safety is an issue the will not only affect Barrington residents, but all who use Route 14 as their main commuting line. The EJ&E line crosses this highway on level grade just east of Route 59. An increase in traffic on the EJ&E line will impact all commuters who live west of Route 59 and use Route 14 (communities such as Crystal Lake and Cary) as their primary commuting route work. I use this route to travel to my job in Schaumburg. Schaumburg is the second largest business destination (behind Chicago). Route 14 is one of the most direct routes to this destination for those who live in the Northwest suburbs. An increase in trains that cross this road will have an enormously negative impact on an already overly congested road.

This congestion would seriously jeopardize that viability of the business district of downtown Barrington. This area is already a difficult area to access due to the frequent trains on the Metra Tracks and lack of routes in which to cross these tracks. An additional 25 trains per day crossing Route 14 and Route 59 will only encourage people to avoid downtown Barrington all together. Without a viable downtown business district, property taxes will have to be increased, which will subsequently decrease the value of the homes and make this an undesirable area to live.

I understand that the scope of this review is to determine if this acquisition has a negative impact on the entire region and not just our specific community. However, I believe that the negative effects created by increasing the volume on an inferior and unsafe EJ&E line cannot possibly outweigh the positives of a slight reduction in Chicago's current freight congestion. I would greatly appreciate it if you factor these negative issues into your overall assessment of this proposed acquisition. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Sparr", written in a cursive style.

Robert Sparr
982 Commonwealth Court
Barrington, IL 60010