

As a concerned citizen and District #1 candidate for the Will County Board, I encourage residents throughout the area to visit the website www.fighttraincongestion.com to learn more about the proposed acquisition of the E J & E railroad lines by Canadian National (CN). They may also attend the public meetings on Monday, August 25, 4-9pm at the Holiday Inn in Matteson or Thursday, Sept. 11, 4-9pm at the Holiday Inn on Larkin in Joliet. Written comments should be mailed by Sept. 30 to: Phillis Johnson-Ball, Surface Transportation Board, 395 E. Street, SW, Washington, DC 20423, Ref: STB Finance Docket No. 35087.

How does the acquisition of the EJ & E by CN affect people living in the eastern portion of Will County? Whenever there is a community on one side of a railroad track with a hospital on the other side, it alters response time of emergency medical service providers. People living in the Crete and Beecher areas who might normally travel down Route 1 to reach St. James Hospital in Chicago Heights would be delayed by increased (from 6 to 28 trains per day) train traffic on the EJ&E tracks in Chicago Heights. Emergency vehicles would need to take longer, alternate routes to reach St. James' emergency facilities. Frankfort village also has six grade crossings in their community that would pose a similar problem for their emergency vehicles and would affect school bus traffic as well.

Additionally, only 5-10% of the cost of grade crossing mitigation is traditionally covered by the railroad. Federal, state, and local government pays the bulk of the cost for grade crossing separations. Thus a foreign company will reap profits at the expense of American taxpayers. Some argue that Canadian National's purchase of the EJ&E tracks would relieve train traffic congestion into and out of Chicago and would benefit those communities near Chicago. However, that relief would be *short lived* because other trains would eventually fill the void vacated by CN.

There are many other issues to be considered such as noise, pollution, transportation of hazardous materials, etc. Therefore I urge citizens to do some research, attend meetings and write their legislators and/or the Surface Transportation Board by Sept. 30.

Pam Helsel Hoffman

*Will County Board Dist. #1 candidate
President, Crete Rural Park District*