

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

August 28, 2008

Dear Board Members and Illinois Elected Officials:

With regard to the acquisition of the Elgin Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E) rail line by Canadian National (CN) Railway, I would like to make my objections known. My family, my neighbors, my village and all of the surrounding areas will be adversely impacted if the sale is authorized. The purported net economic benefits will be to CN and the seller, US Steel only, with **no benefit, economic or otherwise, to the communities along the railway and all points west of the line's loop around Chicago.**

CN projects an increase in rail traffic from 4.4 to 23.4 trains per day in my area, which has at grade crossings on six roads within an approximate two mile radius. In fact, for all points west of the rail line within that radius access to the east will be blocked. I implore you to look at aerial photos to understand my concerns: my neighborhood and the surrounding streets could potentially be **blocked at all rail crossing simultaneously. We would be isolated by rail traffic at the Smith Road's and Army Trail Road's east and west crossings, Powis Road's north and south crossings and the Stearns Road crossing.** With the exception of the Army Trail Road crossing on the west side of Wayne and the southern crossing at Powis Road, in fact, the other crossings can all be blocked by the same freight train!

If you allow CN to purchase the EJ&E line:

- The safety of my family and community will be jeopardized: access by emergency services is slowed both by trains at crossings and by subsequent traffic congestion following a train clearing the crossings.
- School children will be delayed, and additional bus service, (at additional cost to the school, the state and taxpayers), will be required for the schools, since delays will reverberate throughout the daily bus transport schedule.
- Congestion on the roads will increase as the trains take an average of 4 minutes or more to clear each at grade crossing – enough time for a house fire to double in size four times over or more. **The Village of Wayne DOES NOT have a public water or hydrant system, so a house on fire will burn even longer waiting for the Pumper Engine to arrive.** The potential for additional devastation and impact in a life or death situation is tremendous.
- Noise and environmental pollution will skyrocket, with trains billowing smoke and blowing whistles at all hours of the night and day; some properties are less than 100 feet from the rails! And, since all homes in Wayne draw water from wells, our drinking water is subject to environmental pollutants and any spills which CN may cause.

- The increase in rail traffic will also have an adverse impact on the Illinois Prairie Path users, since there are trail crossings directly over the rail lines.
- The chance for rail accidents is huge. According to information collected by neighboring communities, **CN's safety record is deplorable:**
 - 72 derailments in 2004 alone;
 - A record of collisions in Mississippi and Illinois
 - Internal audit results show defects in 54% of CN's locomotives, 37% had labor violations, and 50% of train brake tests had safety problems.
 - With a SEVEN-FOLD increase in freight tonnage through my historic equestrian village, the bucolic nature of our town, our forest preserves and our green space will be shattered.
- CN plans to install a new rail line to connect the EJ&E, which runs north-south in my area, with their east-west line. This new higher speed curve at Stearns Road will further destroy the Dupage County Forest Preserve, where the land would be required for the curve's installation.
- The proposed STAR transit system, meant to alleviate the ill-effects of single commuter autos by linking the suburbs north and south to the Chicago bound commuter system cannot realistically share the rail line with 24 daily freight trains each a mile or more in length. The result: more cars waiting for the train to clear at grade crossings and abandonment of the STAR transit solution.
- And, again: my neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhoods all stand to be trapped by the trains WITH NO EXIT AS FREIGHT TRAINS SIMULTANEOUSLY BLOCK ALL SURROUNDING ROADS. One heart attack, house fire or burglary is one too many while the victim waits for help, which is stuck at Army Trail Road, Powis Road, Smith Road or Stearns Road, incapable of reaching the person in distress. How many extra minutes could you or your loved ones wait for the ambulance, the police or the fire department to arrive – so CN can cut their costs? My family's safety is far more important than CN's bottom line!

Again, CN proposes there will be an economic benefit to the overall area, but I am hard-pressed to find any parties that benefit beyond CN and US Steel; the communities with a net decrease in rail traffic downtown will see a decrease only in CN freight trains, not all trains. And all communities along the EJ&E will be adversely impacted by pollution, noise, congestion, decreased emergency service response times, exposure to hazardous freight and potential rail mishaps, increased commuter times, lost access to the proposed STAR line, loss of local community cohesion as towns are bifurcated and plummeting home values, to list just some of the negatives.

I urge you to stand up against this sale. The minor time and cost savings for CN by routing around Chicago instead of using existing routes is miniscule in comparison to the damage it will do to the U.S.

citizens near the EJ&E. Please support us in our fight against this incursion into our neighborhoods and our communities.

Thomas and Kathleen Ashton
31W770 Percheron Lane
Wayne, IL 60184
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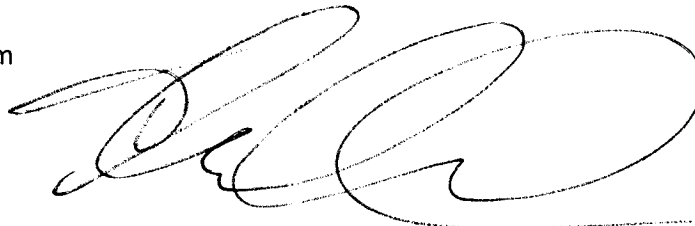
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Thomas and Kathleen Ashton
31W770 Percheron Lane
Wayne, IL 60184
630-443-8560
thomasmaston@yahoo.com

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized representation of the names Thomas and Kathleen Ashton. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.