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Board of Trustees

August 19, 2021

Daniel Capuano
President

Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-001

CC: Parties of Record

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Amanda Beedle
Vice-President

RE: STB Docket No. FD 36472
CSX Corporation and CSX Transportation, Inc., et. al.
Control and Merger-Pan Am Systems, Inc., et. al

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
August 20, 2021
Part of
Public Record

Rachel Lane
Secretary

To Whom it may Concern,

Melanie Shatynski
Treasurer

On behalf of Altamont Free Library, I write to express my concerns about the proposed acquisition of Pan-Am Systems, Inc. by CSX Transportation. In particular, my concerns are related to one element of the acquisition that would have the effect of increasing train traffic through our Village, which I feel would negatively impact the health and safety of residents of our Village.

Katie Barker
Shannon Duerr
Deborah Marion Katz
Katherine Nelson
Paul Scilipoti
Trustees

I take as the basis for my comment reporting done in multiple articles by journalist Sean Mulkerrin for the *Altamont Enterprise*. On March 17, 2021, he reported that the proposal being considered would allow "Norfolk Southern the right to use CSX's rails between Voorheesville and central Massachusetts to move "one" 9,000-foot-long double-stacked "train pair" — a single train, nearly two miles long, traveling to and from Massachusetts — per day."

Joseph P Burke
Director

My concern stems from the traffic patterns that are likely to result from the prolonged train passages across Main Street in Altamont, and the fact there are no means of underpassing the tracks anywhere within many miles of the Main Street level crossing. A cursory look at a map of the Village will reveal that if mile-trains shut down Main Street for more than a few minutes at a stretch, two issues will likely result:

-First, emergency response vehicles will be prevented from quickly accessing a significant portion of the Village. There are no methods of bypassing the train tracks in or near the Village via an underpass. First responders, who are dispatched from the north side of the tracks could be delayed from responding to emergencies on the south side of the tracks for ten minutes or more. Moreover, for major sections of the adjacent Town of Knox, Altamont first responders are the closest dispatch point for fire and medical emergency services, and a ten-minute delay in responding time may mean the difference between life and death, or a house being salvageable or not.

-Second, south of the tracks, NY Rte. 156 begins a steep and winding climb up a hill. If Main Street is closed off for ten minutes or longer each time a two-mile train passes through, a dangerous traffic pattern is likely to emerge where cars are backed up through the intersections of Altamont Boulevard, Main Street, Prospect Terrace, Helderberg Avenue, and NY Rte. 156. (the so called "Five Corners"). If road traffic backs up going up the hill, cars coming down the hill at high speeds are likely not to have sufficient warning of the presence of stopped cars, due to the blind curves on the hill. Car accidents are all but certain to result over time unless appropriate warning signals are put in place.

Finally, I am concerned about potential damage that will occur to our historic library building with the additional rumbling of a ten minute-or more double decker train passing each day. Altamont Free Library is housed in the history Altamont Train Station, built for the D&H Railroad in 1897, and as such is immediately adjacent to the train tracks that will see the increased traffic. It is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. I am concerned that the additional rumbling and shaking caused by a daily 9,000-foot double-decker train passing twenty feet from our building could cause damage to our slate roof, brick chimney, and other parts of the building which place an additional bourdon on the library for expensive repairs. The station simply wasn't built with that kind of shaking and jostling in mind. A two-minute train passage a few times per week is one thing. A ten-minute passage is one thing, but a daily ten-minute passage is quite another, and would represent, at minimum, a five-fold increase in the shaking that the building endures each week.

Altamont Free Library has long partnered with SMS Rail Lines on projects and events, and we wish nothing but the best for whatever company controls the rail line adjacent to our property. However, the disruptions and safety concerns attendant with the proposed plan will negatively far too many Altamont and Knox residents, who will derive only highly diffuse benefits from it. I strongly urge you reject the proposal for the reasons stated above.

Sincerely,

Joseph Burke

Director, Altamont Free Library