

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 27, 2021

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The Honorable Martin J. Oberman
The Honorable Robert E. Primus
The Honorable Patrick J. Fuchs
The Honorable Ann D. Begeman
The Honorable Michelle A. Schultz
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

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

Dear Chairman Oberman, Vice Chair Primus, Member Fuchs, Member Begeman, and Member Schultz:

I write today to highlight concerns raised by several residents of the Islington Creek neighborhood in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. These residents are concerned about the impacts of the merger and changes in rail traffic in the neighborhood.

Their comments raise important issues about noise and environmental pollution and how the merger might increase those concerns. I urge the board to give to give these concerns thoughtful and appropriate consideration when considering this merger. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

The Surface Transportation Board

RE: Comments for Docket No. FD 36472

Dear Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

We are residents writing to provide comments that address local environmental and other issues that have been troublesome to our Islington Creek neighborhood in Portsmouth, New Hampshire for years, and to share with you our efforts to address them.

The neighborhood consists of 18 streets adjacent to the Pan Am rail tracks. In recent years, it has become more densely mixed residential/commercial, replacing the industrial zone that persisted for decades.

Our neighborhood does not object to the merger. Furthermore, we support the trains and the important work they do in the Seacoast Region, expanding commerce and contributing to economic stability.

Our Request

We are asking for ways to reduce the community impact of noise and diesel fumes – pollution – adjacent to our densely populated residential neighborhood and in the switching yard near Maplewood Avenue from long-idling trains. The idling and train noise go on at all hours of the day and night and last for many hours and sometimes continues for several days at a time. The middle-of-the-night yard activity is especially disruptive as are long idling times. As propane traffic to the Newington Terminal has been increasing, so has the impact of noise and diesel fumes, with a huge increase noticed over the past six months. Moreover, the long-term rail car storage is unattractive and greatly impacts the neighborhood.

How Bad Can It Get?

“I’m begging you on behalf of the health of the children in our neighborhood to do something,” Nicole LaPierre, an Islington Creek resident, told Portsmouth city councilors in September 2019. An idling Pan Am train woke her at 2 in the morning and she wasn’t able to get back to sleep, she added. “I would equate that diesel train with psychological torture. The noise and air pollution are disgusting.”

“The fumes from the trains idling... was very heavy and it was very loud, too.”
Portsmouth Police Commissioner Jim Splaine. “We just can’t throw up our hands,”
he added.

A local reporter observed: “During a trip to the neighborhood Tuesday evening, a Pan Am train sat idling on the tracks right behind the city’s new Foundry Place Garage. The sound of the train idling could be heard several hundred yards away and in less than 20 minutes fumes from the Pan Am train filled the nearby Rock Street Neighborhood Park, which the city recently renovated.”

Acknowledging the problems

Our concerns were acknowledged by Cindy Scarano, Executive Vice President of Pan Am, in the summer and early autumn of 2019 at which time she vowed to make some corrective measures. (See “Pan Am Vows Action” September 29-30, 2019; Seacoastonline.com). She pledged that: 1. The train crews would shut down the locomotives at temperatures above 40 degrees; 2. Pan Am would look to find the best location to park the trains and 3. Pan Am would work with the community and address other concerns.

Since that time, no progress was made to address our concerns. In fact, the situation has worsened significantly with expanded propane activity at the Newington terminal.

Concluding Remarks

We want to emphasize that we fully support rail commerce and have no objection to the merger. We are asking that Pan Am work with us to reduce the community impact from the idling trains, rail yard storage and nighttime rail activity in our neighborhood. The current condition here continues to have an increasingly detrimental impact on the quality of life.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Cataldo – 133 Islington Street, Portsmouth

Tomas Hiney – 101 Langton Street, Portsmouth

Robin Husslage – 27 Rock Street, Portsmouth

Nicole LaPierre – 44 Rock Street, Portsmouth



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

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Karen S. Conard
City Manager

August 27, 2021

The Honorable Chris Pappas
323 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: STB Docket FD 36472, CSX Corporation and CSX Transportation, Inc., et al. - Control and Merger
Pan Am Systems, Inc., et al

Dear Congressman Pappas:

Enclosed please find comments provided to the Surface Transportation Board in reference to the above matter from residents of the Islington Creek neighborhood in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I am forwarding these comments to you in order for you to be aware of our residents' concerns.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Karen Conard
City Manager

Enclosure

cc: Lawrence Cataldo
Tomas Hiney
Robin Husslage
Nicole LaPierre