

The Surface Transportation Board

RE: Comments for Docket No. FD 36472

Dear Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
September 1, 2021
Part of
Public Record

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 continue 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 Huslage – 27 Rock Street, Portsmouth

Nicole LaPierre – 44 Rock Street, Portsmouth

Docket Number: FD_36472

CSX CORPORATION AND CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC.—CONTROL AND MERGER—PAN AM SYSTEMS, INC., PAN AM RAILWAYS, INC., BOSTON AND MAINE CORPORATION, MAINE CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY, NORTHERN RAILROAD, PAN AM SOUTHERN LLC, PORTLAND TERMINAL COMPANY, SPRINGFIELD TERMINAL RAILWAY COMPANY, STONY BROOK RAILROAD COMPANY, AND VERMONT & MASSACHUSETTS RAILROAD COMPANY

September 1, 2021

This is to certify that I have sent a copy of these comments to each ‘party of record’ via email or standard US mail (when no email address was given).

/S/

Lawrence Cataldo

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