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September 29, 2008

Phillis Johnson-Ball
STB Finance Docket No. 35087
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball

The proposed CN acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway Company (EJ&E) troubles me. While there appears to be some benefit to certain suburban Chicago communities there will be significant negative impacts for the communities along the EJ&E line.

Will County has recently experienced unprecedented growth, doubling in population to over 700,000 residents. The population is projected to grow to 1.1 million by 2030 and the County currently ranks 36th in the nation for job creation. Every taxing body in Will County and surrounding counties has been challenged to provide services and up-grade infrastructure to keep up with growth. While the current economy lags across the country, our region continues to grow.

Although the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is a comprehensive document, it fails to fully identify the impact of the transaction and does not address how the negative effects will be resolved. The 60 day comment period provides little time for local governments to thoroughly analyze the wide-ranging negative effects and substantiate their concerns to the STB.

The DEIS fails to review all mainline crossings or consider new traffic patterns that will be created by delays. Arterial roads built to accommodate less traffic will have to be up-graded at significant cost as drivers attempt to avoid delays caused by trains. This is another substantial burden placed on local governments, as it will require them to identify, plan for and remedy.

The suggestion that the State and Federal Government be responsible for funding grade improvements at the crossings places the financial responsibility directly on the backs of taxpayers. As American citizens, the STB understands the financial frailty of our Federal government. The State of Illinois is not in a financial position to pay for the negative effects caused by the actions of a private, for-profit, company.

The price of fuel in the United States is rapidly rising with little relief in sight. As our Federal Government continues to search for alternative sources of energy, the need for efficient methods to carry goods across the country has revived the rail industry. Projections show a growing demand for rail transport for the foreseeable future. The increased demand on rail service places a greater responsibility on all railroads and the STB to consider the safety and welfare of citizens.

The DEIS provides 3 years of oversight following approval of the transaction. CN has proposed to phase in train traffic over the same three year period. Just as the area reaches the proposed peak in train traffic, oversight by the STB will end. Oversight on this transaction must continue beyond the customary 3 years to ensure mitigation requirements are fulfilled and CN remains a good corporate neighbor.

CN's proposal to shift some trains from the densely populated suburbs of Chicago to the densely populated region of the collar counties is short sighted and a short term fix. The time has come when railroad companies need to be good corporate citizens by accepting considerable responsibility for the obstacles they create. I strongly urge the STB to either require significant mitigation by CN for the problems created by the proposed acquisition or deny this transaction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Cross', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Cross
House Republican Leader
State Representative, District #84