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House of Representatives
Elga Jefferies
State Representative • 26th District

July 8, 2008

The Honorable Vernon A. Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Subject: *Canadian National Railway Co., et al - Control - EJ&E*
West Company, STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Secretary Williams:

I represent the 26th Illinois State Representative District. I support the proposal by Canadian National Railway Company (CN) to acquire control over the EJ&E West Company (EJ&E). It is my opinion that this transaction will improve rail service through the Chicago metropolitan area and that it will have no adverse effects on competition. I also ask that the STB complete its environmental review process and approve the proposed transaction as quickly as possible.

I understand there will be a reduction of train traffic over the CN line through my district from the current level of about 6 trains per day to 0 trains per day. This will create excess capacity on the line thereby enhancing the prospect for more frequent Metra trains. Moreover, the transaction will reduce environmental impacts within my district, including air emissions, noise and grade crossing delays. More significant for the national rail transportation network, removal of trains from lines through the Chicago region will free up capacity for other carriers and reduce energy consumption and transit times for traffic moving through the Chicago gateway on CN as well as other railroads.

I recognize that as train traffic moves off of downtown Chicago rail lines, some communities along the EJ&E right-of-way will experience train traffic increases. I understand that the STB will be preparing an Environmental Impact Statement that will assess the impacts of this increased traffic. I have been told by CN that it is reaching out to those communities to identify these issues, and to assist these communities in addressing them as appropriate.

I am aware that some communities oppose CN's request that the STB set target deadlines for completion of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and for issuance of a final decision. CN's proposed schedule provides ample time for the Board to secure the information it needs. I understand that the STB has been undertaking its environmental analysis since December, 2007 and has provided many opportunities for interested citizens, community officials, and government agencies to provide comments, including the scoping meetings held in January, 2008. Under CN's timetable, the STB's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has sufficient time to complete its study and the public will have once again an opportunity to provide input to the STB during the period that will be provided for comment on the Draft EIS.

Page 2

Canadian National Railway Co., et al Control – EJ&E

West Company, STG Finance Docket No. 35087

July 8, 2008

These localized impacts do not outweigh the significant overall environmental benefits of this transaction on the region or the transportation benefits of the transaction for shippers in Illinois and around the country. I urge the Board to complete its environmental review process expeditiously, and to approve this transaction so that the residents of the 26th District and shippers from around the State and Nation can begin seeing the benefits it will bring.

Please enter these comments into the record of this docket.

Sincerely,



Representative Elga L. Jefferies
Illinois House of Representatives