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Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20423

Ref: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson:

I strongly support the CN acquisition of the EJ & E Railway Company. While Chicago is the rail hub of the US, the transit times moving from one side of Chicago to the other have always been terrible and have lead to trains being rerouted around Chicago by the Class I railroads. If something isn't done to improve this situation, Chicago could be bypassed entirely and this would cause a severe negative impact on the local economy..

The STB needs to take a regional view of rail transportation and in so doing should logically conclude that the CN acquisition of the EJ & E will benefit the entire Chicago land area, as well as large parts of the rest of the country. Truck and rail traffic is expected to double in the Chicago area by 2020, at which time, if no steps are taken, traffic will come to a virtual standstill. New rail lines are not being built, nor are new highways under construction, and even if construction started next year, it would not be soon enough. So, we must make better usage of existing facilities.

American citizens ultimately pay the price for this impasse in several ways. Air pollution is a serious consideration. By moving traffic around Chicago instead of through the heavily populated and more congested urban areas, there will be less impact on truck and car traffic. Fewer trucks and cars will be stopped by freight and intermodal trains, and this should have a positive impact on air pollution. As you are probably aware, Chicago has a very high particulate count because of diesel fuel, primarily from truck traffic.

Secondly, trains will be able to move more rapidly over the EJ & E lines, and this will improve transit times. Improving transit times helps reduce the number of rail cars and trains in the system which helps further alleviate congestion. An example of this is the horrible situation that occurred several years ago in the Houston area after the UP

acquisition of the SP when the SP experienced a meltdown. Transit times increased dramatically and shippers had to increase their car fleets because of the worsening transit times and the additional cars led to increased congestion and even worse transit times.

As a resident of Riverside, IL, I am a quarter of a mile from the BNSF mainline which runs through the center of Riverside. There are about 150 trains/day on this mainline and the CN mainline is less than a mile north of my home. I cannot leave Riverside without crossing a rail line. So, even if the rail volume doubles, triples or quadruples in some suburbs like Wilmette, Aurora or Barrington that are located on the EJ & E, I can't imagine the disruptions would approach what I experience on a daily basis, or what the hundreds of thousands of other urban residents in the Chicago area currently experience.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the STB to approve this merger and take a giant step toward improving transportation in the entire Chicago area. With the capital investment the CN has committed to, the EJ & E will also operate more efficiently than it currently does, which should further improve rail transit times.

Sincerely yours,

*-Robert G. Barr*

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