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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
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REF: STB FINANCE DOCKET NO. 35087

DEAR PHILLIS JOHNSON - BALL

AS A LIFELONG RESIDENT OF THE CHICAGO LAND AREA AND CURRENT RESIDENT OF BARRINGTON, ILLINOIS I AM WELL AWARE OF THE IMPACT OF RAILROADS ON THE CHICAGO REGION.

THE FIRST 27 YEARS OF MY LIFE I LIVED IN MAYWOOD, ILLINOIS NEXT TO THE CHICAGO GREAT WESTERN RAILROAD WHERE I EXPERIENCED OUR WHOLE HOUSE SHAKING AS THE STEAM DRIVEN LOCOMOTIVES THUNDERED THRU TOWN WITH THERE WHISTLES BLOWING. THAT WAS WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND IT APPEARED RATHER EXCITING.

THE NEXT 20 YEARS I LIVED IN WESTCHESTER WHERE THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL TRACKS WERE ELEVATED SO THERE WERE NO SURFACE INTERSECTIONS.

THE NEXT 30 YEARS OF MY LIFE I COMMUTED 37 MILES TO COUNTRYSIDE, IL FROM BARRINGTON. I MANAGED TO AVOID ALL BUT THE BURLINGTON SANTA FE RAILROAD CROSSINGS IN LAGRANGE OR WESTERN SPRINGS. THE RAILROAD HAS 3 TRACKS RUNNING THRU LAGRANGE AND I EXPERIENCED COUNTLESS DELAYS WAITING FOR 150 CAR COAL TRAINS

AND CONTAINER TRAINS AT THESE INTER SECTIONS AND MANY TIMES THESE TRAINS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 OR 5 MINUTES TO CLEAR THE INTERSECTION. SOMETIMES THE TRAINS SLOWED DOWN AND EVEN STOPPED REQUIRING 15 AND 20 MINUTE DELAYS AND THIS WAS ON A 3 RAIL SYSTEM WITH PARALLEL STREETS RUNNING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE TRACKS WHICH I CONSIDER A VERY EFFICIENT SETUP.

HOWEVER THIS IS NOT THE CASE WITH THE E J & E WHICH IS A SINGLE TRACK SYSTEM RUNNING ON ALL AT GRADE CROSSINGS WITH A MINIMUM RIGHT OF WAY. IT CROSSES U.S. HIGHWAY ROUTE 14 AT GRADE, JUST 200 YARDS LATER IT CROSSES HOGG ST. (ROUT 59) AND A FEW HUNDRED YARDS LATER CROSSES THE UNION PACIFIC TRACKS AND A FEW HUNDRED YARDS LATER CROSSES LAKE-COOK (COUNTY LINE ROAD). THERE IS LITTLE ROOM TO CONSTRUCT PARALLEL STREETS OR WIDEN THE RIGHT OF WAY WHERE YOU CAN VIEW AN APPROACHING TRAIN BEFORE IT REACHES THE INTERSECTION.

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING, THAT THE CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY INTENDS TO RUN CONTAINER TRAINS ORIGINATING IN CANADIAN PORTS WITH DESTINATIONS IN MEMPHIS AND THEN SHIPPED TO EUROPE USING EASTERN OR GULF PORTS.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY OPERATING ON THE E J & E THROUGH BARRINGTON WILL RESULT IN ONLY 3 OR 4 MINUTE DELAYS AT RAIL INTERSECTIONS, BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT BARRINGTON'S MAIN ROADS AND HIGHWAYS ARE OVER CROWDED DURING RUSH HOURS. THERE IS ALSO SLOW MOVING TRAFFIC AT OTHER TIMES ALSO BECAUSE THE STATE NEEDS TO WIDEN

HOUGH ST (ROUTE 59) THROUGH BARRINGTON BUT NEVER HAS FUNDS TO DO THE JOB.

SLOW MOVING OR STOPPED TRAINS WILL PARALYSE THE BARRINGTON AREA.

AT THE LEAST, THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD SHOULD REQUIRE THAT CANADIAN NATIONAL CONSTRUCT AND PAY FOR OVERPASSES AT ALL MAJOR INTERSECTIONS BEFORE ALLOWING CANADIAN NATIONAL TO PURCHASE THE EJE RAILROAD.

THE CANADIAN NATIONAL PURCHASE OF EJE RAILROAD APPEARS TO BRING NO BENEFIT TO THE CHICAGO REGION.

IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THE EJE HAS BEEN USED PRIMARILY AS A REGIONAL DISTRIBUTOR RAILROAD USED FOR MOVING HEAVY COMMODITIES WITHIN THE REGION. A GOOD REASON WHY U.S. STEEL FELT THE NEED TO OWN IT.

THE CANADIAN NATIONAL PURCHASE OF THE EJE RAILROAD BRINGS NO BENEFIT TO THE CHICAGO REGION. IT ADDS POORER AIR QUALITY AND INCREASED SAFETY HAZZARDS.

IT ALSO HAS CREATED MUCH ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THOSE ENTITIES WHICH MIGHT BENEFIT FROM LESS RAIL TRAFFIC AND THOSE THAT WILL EXPERIENCE THE BURDEN OF MORE AND CHANGE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.

Howard Norton