

September 15, 2008

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

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball and the Surface Transportation Board;

I have been a resident of Deer Park, Illinois for 34-years. Deer Park shares a common border with Barrington and we are part of School District 220 where our children go to school. We also share a common threat coming from the proposed purchase of the E J & E railroad (EJ) by Canadian National Railroad (CN). This is no small threat to us in the Barrington area. With this purchase the CN will increase rail traffic through our area by 400% with much longer freight trains, up to two miles long, on these tracks. This added rail traffic would have a major impact on our area that can never be fully mitigated.

Of major concern is our SAFETY. With the increase in rail traffic, on the scale CN is proposing, our access to Good Shepherd Hospital will be significantly compromised, since the two crossings my family must use get to the hospital could very well be blocked simultaneously for an undetermined length of time. This could well be a life and death issue. Why is Good Shepherd Hospital access not considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS)? The same holds true for all emergency vehicles trying to get through or around the Barrington area. On school days there are 840 school bus crossings daily, plus the normal pedestrian and auto traffic trying to get to and from the schools. Traffic congestion will be a nightmare with the three major roads going through the center of Barrington having to contend with five grade crossings, including three that belong to the EJ. A 400% increase on the EJ tracks would make it almost impossible to get around Barrington; especially with the longer "monster-trains" CN proposes to run on the EJ tracks. The DEIS confirms the risk of rail accidents will increase on our tracks with this purchase, so why is the CN dismal safety record not considered in the draft report? The residents of the Barrington will be paying the price of more accidents with our lives. A recent accident causing a chemical spill by CN should be reason enough to pay closer attention to this proposal. Why did DEIS minimize the risk of hazardous material spills that could easily contaminate our only water source (shallow aquifers)?

The economic impact on our community will be devastating. Shopping patterns will change where business will suffer, tax revenues lost, and real estate values will depreciate. The future of the Star line will be in question and the CREATE overall rail plan for metro Chicago will have to be reworked. To this day CN has not addressed mitigation expenses factually or fairly. Why should U S taxpayers suffer for the benefit of a foreign company, or any private company that will impact an area in such a severe way? Is this now a nation where big business can trample over people just so they can increase their profits...and at our expense?

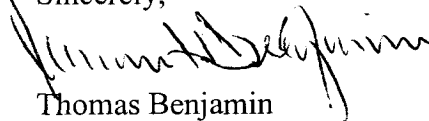
Barrington was on the map long before the EJ was built. We have lived with trains and built our town and lives around the current train traffic. We get to our schools, we recreate, we do business and shop, we worship, we receive emergency services, and we live together moving about as a community. The proposed purchase by CN will affect our life style with a severe impact upon our safety, economy, environment, and future growth and development.

I urge you to consider the well being of the people you serve, and not give in to a huge foreign company with a large lobbying effort that will add nothing to the State of Illinois, but will only use us as a "corridor" for their delivery of foreign products from the new Port of Prince Rupert in British Columbia to Memphis, TN. If this purchase takes place a beautiful village and its surroundings will be devastated for what...a freight yard?

Please represent the people of this nation, and not a foreign railroad company that will only destroy a standard this community achieved along with the many other communities who share the same issues, and will be negatively impacted by the proposed transaction. The people of these communities have worked hard and invested their lives for a chance to live in good safe neighborhoods, with quality education, reliable commuter transportation, a growing business environment and other important municipal services that will be sacrificed if the CN proposal to purchase the EJ is allowed to go through.

It is in your hands, what would you do if Barrington were your hometown?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Benjamin', written over a horizontal line.

Thomas Benjamin
20366 Lea Rd.
Deer Park, IL 60010