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Surface Transportation Board
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Ref: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

First, I would like to thank you and rest of your staff for allowing us to share our concerns during the meeting that was held in Joliet. Most of the comments were against the CN acquisition and very few comments were for it. In fact the reason speakers spoke in favor of this was for financial gain.

There comes a time when we as a concern nation must stop and analyze our actions. Our actions must reflect the safety and needs of people rather than profit gains of a company.

People along the EJ&E line have many legitimate concerns regarding how this acquisition will affect the safety and quality of life in their communities. How will the numerous long trains affect fire and police responses? Will ambulances be hindered in their life saving efforts? No one seems willing to adequately address the issue of maintaining the present standard of quality of life for the people along the acquisition route.

Since CN stands to make considerable profit by moving their operations to the EJ&E line, they should be held 100% responsible for the costs others will need to bear due to their actions. If you do not make this a condition of the acquisition, then there will be no way to get CN to agree to the cost of their actions in the future. Some of the conditions that need to be met and paid in full for by CN would be the need for over and/or under passes along the EJ&E line. This would prevent long trains holding up police, fire, ambulances, people beating the trains by going around rails and loud noise of train whistles.

Attached is an article which appeared in the Chicago Tribune newspaper. It states a letter was sent by the Illinois congressional delegations to the chief executive of 3 major freight railroads including CN. It has asked CN to revise train dispatching decisions to ease the bottleneck delaying Amtrak trains. Freight railroads routinely violate a federal law requiring that track preference be given to Amtrak trains, according to an analysis released this week by the inspector general of U.S. Department of Transportation.

Please, consider the safety and quality of people's life rather than the profits another company like CN will gain by the acquisition of the EJ&E.

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Amtrak trains mired in freight traffic

By Jon Hilkevitch
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Amtrak ridership has surged thanks to high gas prices, but increased interference from freight trains is causing the passenger railroad's poor on-time performance to suffer, according to a new government report.

Amtrak trains serving Illinois arrived late 50 percent of the time on average in August, according to Amtrak. That's a decline from a 53 percent on-time record in fiscal year 2007.

The least-punctual Amtrak trains are on routes where the tracks from origin to destination are owned by freight railroads. More than 70 percent of the miles traveled by Amtrak trains in the U.S. are on tracks owned by other railroads.

The Illinois Saluki, which operates between Chicago and Carbondale, was on time only 40 percent in August, down from 69 percent in fiscal year 2007.

The Lincoln Service between Chicago and St. Louis arrived on schedule only 44 percent of the time in August, according to Amtrak data.

Meanwhile, Amtrak ridership on state-supported routes in Illinois is up more than 10 percent overall this year compared with 2007, with some routes showing gains of more than 40 percent, officials said.

The growing delays prompted members of the Illinois congressional dele-

gation to send a letter this week to the chief executives at three major freight railroads that operate in the state.

The letter asked the freight companies—the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Canadian National and Union Pacific railroads—to push ahead with capital investments to streamline rail operations. It also urged them to revise train-dispatching decisions to ease the bottlenecks delaying Amtrak trains.

The goal, the letter said, should be an on-time rate of at least 85 percent by passenger trains on the freight tracks.

"On-time performance is the single largest factor in customer satisfaction," Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari said.

Freight railroads routinely violate a federal law requiring that track preference be given to Amtrak trains, according to an analysis released this week by the inspector general of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Other key causes of Amtrak delays were track maintenance work or deteriorated tracks that forced trains to slow down, insufficient track capacity and external factors beyond the freight railroads' control, the inspector general found.

Late trains cost Amtrak more than \$100 million annually.

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