

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

September 26, 2008

RE: Docket #35087, CN Purchase of the EJ&E Railroad in Illinois

Dear Ms. Rutson:

As a thirteen-year resident and taxpayer of the City of Naperville, I would like to express my opinion about the acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad by the Canadian National Railway. While I am deeply saddened at the prospect of yet ANOTHER foreign company purchasing an historic and vital piece of the United States, I still STRONGLY favor it. The Chicago area needs it for jobs and economic prosperity now and far into the future. Moreover, the United States as a whole needs it, and as soon as possible. After more than fifty years of declining and shrinking railroad infrastructure, a process that began long before I was born, we find ourselves, as a nation, more in need of the energy efficient transportation of the railroad than ever before. Chicago is the rail hub of our nation. Tractor-trailers use way too much fuel and clog and destroy the interstates. Therefore, it is not surprising, in these times of high fuel prices, that rail traffic has become heavier. With that, we need to act quickly and decisively about our desire to ease rail congestion in the Chicago area and to keep the United States on the move--literally and economically. Both the federal and state governments need to work together to revitalize the commuter, passenger and freight components of rail traffic for now and far into the future.

I would like to make a sociological comment on the citizenry and government of both Naperville and Barrington and their general opposition to the acquisition. Naperville and Barrington are both bubbles of affluence in a largely blue collar and lower middle class glass. Naperville strives in every imaginable way possible to create a "Disneyland" image and ethos that few other "real" communities want or could ever hope to conjure. While admittedly it is a very desirable place to live, with great amenities and city services, it is not the "real" world. Even Napervillians know that. It certainly is not the world that a struggling couple with children in Maywood or the east side of Joliet, to name some examples, would know. Naperville derives much of its wealth and easy living from an economy that comes from less "perfect" towns—towns that more fully embrace their railroad heritage and have learned how to live with and appreciate it. For many Napervillians, the railroad is only a means to get to downtown Chicago, where they work at their higher paying, executive jobs. It is put of mind minutes after they step off the 5:32 p.m. express train.

I imagine that many of the opponents of this acquisition from Naperville and Barrington alike will use the safety of the well being their children as the primary and classic excuse to summarily dismiss it. This is a common tactic of our short-sighted citizens. Please put these comments in their proper light, because whenever that excuse is used, as often happens here on a variety of issues, from school taxes to road construction, one should learn to translate them, as appropriate, to "I don't want to be inconvenienced by the blocked traffic," "I don't want to live in a railroad town," "This will bring down my property value" or, more tacitly and telling, "This doesn't fit the image of Naperville!" In other words, "I want all the economic and material advantages that this railroad acquisition has and could bring, but I don't want to pay the price. Let it happen somewhere else." Unfortunately, these attitudes are born out of selfishness, shortsightedness and a strong disconnection from the blue collar past of their parents' generation.

Admittedly, the increased rail traffic will bring problems for road vehicles. However, NOW is the right time to make pre-purchase stipulations that could ensure the timely construction of grade separations, initially at key points. A tough crossing that comes to mind for the City of Aurora, is the one at U.S. Route 34 (Ogden Avenue). A plan would need to be in place long before the acquisition to see that that grade and similar crossings receive due diligence. We deserve that. The business of emergency response vehicle being blocked is a very real hazard and not to be slighted. However, I believe that it is highly manageable, with proper foresight. Many towns, Naperville included, have done admirably in living peacefully with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. We have no less than four fine grade-separated crossings. Even in West Chicago, where the Union Pacific Railroad and the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad cross, at grade, other accommodations have been enacted within that town. Needless to say that municipality will be highly affected with the increased traffic and will need more extensive grade separations. The design and construction of the grade separations not only will have long term benefits, but also the shorter term business of providing jobs to various forms of skilled construction labor.

I cannot speak specifically about the environmental impact, but I do know that anything move that allows for more freight trains will take more trucks off the road, and that alone will slow down the release of so called "greenhouse gases" and other hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides out of the environment.

Yes, this proposal needs more review. However, ultimately, I am in favor of it passing in such a way that allows for reassertion of a much-needed freight and passenger rail service, protection of the environment and peaceful coexistence with affected communities.

Thank you for your consideration of my requests.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David".

Sincerely,

David M. Mancini-Conway