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 Surface Transportation Board
 395 E Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20423
 Ref: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Greetings STB Board Members,

I am writing to comment and express my deep concerns on the proposed rail transaction between Canadian National Railway (CN) and U.S Steel's EJ&E West Company, and the completed studies by STB on this transaction.

To be forthright, my family and I are homeowners with residence and property backing up to these tracks in far west Hoffman Estates (HE), IL. Our home lies within 110 feet of the track; the end of our property is only 50 feet from the track. We will be **negatively affected far more than most people who may be affected in any way by an approved transaction**. There are also some 300 - 500 Hoffman Estates homes (conservatively) within short walking distance to these tracks. They too will be affected. I am concerned that you may not have heard much from the officials of our town. I want to ensure you are aware that HE is yet another municipality whose residents will be negatively impacted.

As you know, the current rate of train traffic on the single track line behind our home never exceeds 5 trains per day and is often no more than two per day. As of today, the type of freight carried on this line is typically steel, coal and non-hazardous goods. We purchased our home with these rail metrics in mind. While the EJ&E "track zone" we live by allows trains to travel at relatively high speeds (up to 79 mph?), the infrequency of freight traffic, the type of freight carried, and the historically low incidents of derailments by EJ&E posed little threat of a safety concern for us in our decision as to whether to purchase this property or not. Our most liberal future projections of what might occur on this line couldn't have envisioned a freight carrier like CN coming in with plans to make quantum increases from 5 - 25 trains per day, including the 5-fold increase in carrying the types of hazardous freight they now plan to carry on this single track line.

As a home owner who shares the same turf with this track, I am now **deeply concerned and significantly worried** about this transaction; how it will affect us personally, and how it will impact our local community here in far West Hoffman Estates. My greatest concerns are not so much the noise (though that is also a concern to us) nor the traffic bottlenecks it will cause on Shoe Factory road (an at grade crossing) but the safety of myself and my family through the (almost overnight) increased potential for a derailment of hazardous materials by this carrier (CN) on this line.

The logic for my concerns about a potential CN derailment stem from a **convergence of risk factors**. This type of analysis (eg. risk convergence) is one that **I did not see addressed by your most recent study** (now published). The greatest risk factors that I see for our area are these:

- 1) **We have a single track in our area.** It has been in use for many years. It needs regular and frequent maintenance. It is fine for a scaled down traffic flow (Eg. 5 trains per day or less). It is not ready for a quantum increase of 20 trains per day (w/ even more cars per train, as is CN's plan). Even the STB's most recent study acknowledges that the EJ&E line will go to capacity once CN reaches its projected traffic plans. CN has **no plans** to mitigate this with another adjacent track.
- 2) **This zone in Hoffman Estates is one that allows high speeds for trains.** The track zone we live next to is identified in your most recent study as "EJ&E Segment 14". If I read your study correctly, trains are currently allowed to run up to 79mph on this section of track. Given CN's business plans and eagerness to "move freight through the area", one can expect they will introduce significant increases of high speed CN trains (frequently) on this track. A quantum increase in high speed, heavy, longer trains is bound to put significantly more stress on this track than ever before. This is (likely) not a factor that the towns w/in the current "inner ring" tracks of Chicago suburbs have to worry about currently since

those tracks (with CN trains) have saturation at this time, the CN trains that run on them are (likely) running slower.

- 3) **CN's highly questionable safety & maintenance record.** I know that CN touts (even defends) a supposedly "great safety record". The facts I have come across in my own research indicate quite the contrary. They have had significant numbers of safety related incidents and derailments in Canada and there are quite a few folks in Canada who have been negatively affected by those incidents in Canada and whom (to this day) are upset with CN's shoddy maintenance record and their trivialization of the concerns of the general public about these issues. Some of those folks have learned of this upcoming Chicago-based transaction and are notifying folks in our area that we should be concerned! However, we don't have to look into Canada for safety data on CN. In this past decade alone, Illinois itself has already been victimized by CN's insufficient and relaxed maintenance policies. Please take some time and review at least these 2 links:

http://www.redorbit.com/news/display/?id=202737&source=r_technology)

<http://www.nts.gov/Speeches/engleman/cc/cc20050128.pdf>...(please search for the story "Board Issues Findings on Rail Accident")

It was the NTSB that determined that the probable cause of the Tamaroa, IL accident was a broken rail, due to inappropriate bond wire welds by CN maintenance teams on the rail in an area of known soft ballast conditions. This was CN's maintenance responsibility. That train was carrying significant levels of formaldehyde, hydrochloric acid, methanol, and vinyl chloride. The entire area had to be evacuated for at least 3 days. Thank God there were no deaths; but the danger was there. I am deeply concerned ("worried") this could be us in a couple of years! When factoring in all markets wherein CN operates, I would ask you whether you believe CN's maintenance record shows that they take their responsibilities seriously when carrying these types of materials ?

- 4) **CN plans to transport significant levels of hazardous materials on this line.** This is no secret nor just my speculation. You all are aware of this and they have made clear what their business plans are, and how this line is important to their expansion plans and partnerships with chemical companies, etc. The levels of hazardous material CN will transport will dwarf the levels now carried by EJ&E.
- 5) **Terror organizations are looking for opportunities to strike rail lines deep in the heart of the U.S. which accommodate hazardous materials.** This is not my conjecture. This is the findings of the FBI, the Dept. of Homeland Security and other U.S. intelligence groups. Please review the story entitled "DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR RAIL HAZMAT PLACARDS" at ... <http://www.emergency.com/hzmtpage.htm>

Given the types of materials CN plans to carry on this line, and the global climate, the dangers and the enemies we now have, one would expect CN would invest more in security measures to mitigate potential threats (at least to some degree). I see no real effort on their part to do this nor to control the frequency of trains that will carry such materials on this track.

Incidentally: My understanding from others more knowledgeable in this area is that one of the recommendations of the 911 Commission (to U.S. agencies and businesses involved in oversight and / or transportation of hazardous materials on rail lines in or near large U.S. cities) is that a systematic effort should be initiated by all agencies to move trains carrying these materials out of U.S. metropolitan areas. Moving these trains to our region of the Chicago metropolitan area is BY NO MEANS "moving them out of the Chicago area". I highly doubt whether CN even cares about this particular issue. They do not have to live here. We do.

My conclusions & Points To the STB:

- 1) This rail transaction is primed to endanger the lives of myself, my family and my local community. The rationale for my statement stems from a convergence of risk factors (cited above). I do not believe your recent (published) study on this transaction has adequately addressed these issues nor has recommended

a way to mitigate them. CN certainly has no plans to mitigate them, especially if it means they must invest more \$\$\$. This issue has me deeply concerned and worried.

- 2) This rail transaction is primed to significantly tie up traffic on Shoe Factory Road (and an adjacent bike path) which feeds an "at grade" crossing across the EJ&E tracks. Shoe Factory Road has become a significant "through route" for local traffic. CN plans no mitigation for this crossing. Local tax payers will be stuck with mitigating this intersection.
- 3) This rail transaction is primed to complicate any plans by our local communities to launch and sustain a viable METRA STAR Line. The Chicago West region badly needs the METRA extension, and needs the help of the public and the local governments to make it happen. The Chicago area has one of the worst commuting patterns in our country. We also boast one of the worst average gasoline price indexes any where in the U.S. I will not bore you any more here with this point. There has been enough said to you about this issue already by others I'm sure. Incidentally, I would not oppose a METRA Line on the EJ&E line behind our home. It poses little to no threat to our family.
- 4) Over the long term, this rail transaction will NOT alleviate train traffic in the towns of Chicago's "inner" suburbs that currently host CN trains. This too should be no secret nor perceived as purely my own conjecture. Even CN has gone on record as stating that the reason they want this transaction is to open up capacity on those inner tracks (Eg. meaning "more trains" for those inner tracks at some point). Folks in those areas who believe they will benefit have (apparently) not been paying close attention to what CN plans to do there in the future.
- 5) Finally, given all of these factors, I fail to see how this transaction is truly going to be "beneficial to the region". On the contrary, this transaction is poised to allow a foreign company to come in and increase their profits significantly, w/ little need for mitigation investments, while further endangering the lives of Americans, further complicating an already congested traffic pattern of a large metro area, and all at the expense of the American tax payer. My friends, how is this truly beneficial to our region?

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