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Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

REFERENCE: OPPOSITION TO STB DOCKET NUMBER 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

This letter is an appeal to the STB to take a stand for "the voice of the people" in their final decision on the takeover of the EJ&E Railway by Canadian National. The failure of congress to pass HR6707 as legislation was a huge disappointment and démonstration once again, that our congress has adopted to put the interests of large business before the voice of private citizens. **I appeal to the STB, as our final representation, to act on behalf of the majority voice and deny the transaction.**

The complete negative impact we will experience with increased rail traffic may not have been sufficiently considered in the DEIS. Some specifics are outlines below as well as an excerpt from a previous letter I sent to the STB about this issue. Please review my concerns below, and take them into consideration.

- The bottom line: *Transferring* freight traffic from one urban area to another *heavily populated urban area* is NOT a solution to the problem; it is only transferring the negative impact from one location to another. In order to reasonably solve freight congestion problems, rail traffic should over time be dispersed proportionally over less populated areas.
- Safety & Traffic congestion: One specific example is the rail crossing on Gilmer Road in Hawthorn Woods which as not included as a crossing that would be severely impacted by increased rail traffic and likely should have been included as an area of negative impact. Gilmer Road is one of two just roadways (both with rail crossings) that fire/ambulance services have to access our subdivision- the other roadway (Old McHenry) road WAS cited as a crossing that would be severely impacted. Currently traffic congestion on Gilmer road occurs daily during rush hour causing a ¼ to ½ mile traffic backup east of the rail crossing – that is, WITHOUT the addition of increased freight traffic to contend with.
- Noise pollution/Quality of Life. Large home lots and open spaces in our community do not afford any barrier to the noise that will travel freely from passing freight trains. There are no natural or man-made barriers to subdue the noise that we will have to contend with both day and night. The naturalized landscape/environment is why residents chose to live here. There is no price that can be placed on the quiet, serene environment we enjoy; it is priceless.

- **Economics.** Residents cannot afford, particularly in this economy, to withstand additional loss of home values. Commuters and commercial businesses using the roads with affected crossings will be negatively impacted by additional cost of fuel and time wasted to wait for passing trains.

There are a multitude of impacts that residents and commuters will experience. Below is also a copy of my initial letter to the STB outlining the multitude of reasons we are opposed to this transaction.

This letter to voice our reasons for opposition to the acquisition and use of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway by Canadian National as currently proposed. Our reasons for opposition include safety, quality of life, environmental impact, as well as the potential *economic impact* on residents and non-residents alike, and are described below:

Economic Impact:

- **"Time is money":** commuters and commercial-use vehicles will be adversely affected by the cost of gasoline wasted while idling at stopped trains AND travel times will be increased for commercial vehicles and business-persons alike resulting in higher costs to do business.
- **Our home values are at stake:** reduced home values will be certain- of homes affected by traffic congestion and noise. *(In this economy some residents will not be able to endure additional losses to their real estate market values.)* Much of our real estate value is tied to the fact that residents choose this area partially for the quiet, naturalized landscape- the intrusion of the heavy rail traffic will completely alter the atmosphere we have chosen for our residence- and our home values.

Environmental Impact:

- **Increased air pollution** from exhaust created by stopped vehicles waiting for trains to pass.
- **Noise Pollution:** What research has been done to assess the level of noise residents will endure? We are facing not only a significant increase in the frequency of trains, but it would be logical that larger, longer trains will require larger (louder) locomotives as well. Noises echo and travel freely because of the open spaces in this area.
- We have already been subjected to increased air traffic noise from O'Hare Intl Airport, now we are facing a major intrusion by locomotive/rail traffic. To what end are residents to endure the rail noise on a regular basis both day and night?
- Lake County residents continually approve millions of our tax dollars to preserve open, natural spaces. We have an abundance of wildlife that wander the area which we have "invited" with our landscape and forest preserve system – now we will consciously subject them to the dangers of continual passing trains.

Traffic congestion:

- Halted traffic will not only affect local residents but commuters and **commercial-use vehicles**. *Are we ready for more "gridlock" on the Lake County roadways?*

The suburb of Hawthorn Woods and surrounding suburbs are characterized by many two lane roads. There are no over/under passes for the rail lines crossing most roads. These suburbs, particularly in Lake County, have been increasingly plagued by heavy traffic back-ups even without the wait for passing trains. Our roadways are main thoroughfares not only for local residents but for commuters and many commercial vehicles traveling to/from the far northwest suburbs (Wauconda, McHenry, etc.). Lake County has been plagued by traffic problems for more than a decade- **we haven't resolved the existing problem of traffic congestion- now we are subject to increase it!** (Near our home the E, J&E railway crosses Gilmer Road: Gilmer Road is plagued daily during morning and evening rush hours by more than a ½ mile-long stretch of bumper-to-bumper traffic - on a "good weather day". When the snow falls, the wait to cross Midlothian Road can take more than 30 minutes during peak travel hours without the wait for a

passing train.) Our roadway infrastructure simply cannot sustain an increase in traffic congestion.

- Also, during non-peak travel hours the CNR freighters will inhibit vehicles that use these roadways daily for business/commercial use- and of course, our emergency vehicles.

Safety:

- Our police, fire, and ambulance rescue teams response to medical and other emergencies will be inhibited by roads blocked with passing trains. In Hawthorn Woods, CNR's long freight trains **will** simultaneously block two roads- the only two routes for emergency vehicles to access several sub-divisions. In a medical emergency, minutes count – please... think of families: children, parents, spouses, etc. ***(Isn't it illegal to block police/fire/ambulance access?)***
- There is direct proximity of the rail line to public use and park district areas/bicycle lanes on local roads; effecting the safety of children and adult users.
- We have concerns about the condition of the EJ&J rail lines and road crossings and their ability to sustain the increase in freight traffic. Rail crossings at Gilmer and Old McHenry roads have been repaired at least once in recent years, and are both already showing significant wear with the existing minimal rail traffic- how will rails and crossings sustain the increase in use?
- Representatives from our local fire/rescue services have cited that they simply *are not* equipped to handle a rail accident involving hazardous chemicals, should an accident occur.

To end, the proposition of routing heavy freight traffic through the Chicago suburbs will, for too many reasons, adversely affect residents, commuters, and commercial traffic along the proposed CNR rail system. We thank you for your consideration and efforts to assist us and our neighbors in this important matter.

Regards,


Carol Conrad-Pegler