

U.S. Rep. Melissa L. Bean (IL-08)

Statement before the Section on Environmental Analysis of the Surface Transportation Board
August 26, 2008 – Mundelein / August 27, 2008 – Barrington

Hi I am Melissa Bean representing the Eighth Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives.

I speak to you tonight not only on behalf of the thousands of my constituents whose daily lives would be fundamentally altered by increased freight traffic on the EJ&E Railroad, but as a mom who crosses these tracks every day...

There are well over 40 communities along the EJ&E including in my district the Barrington area, Mundelein, Hawthorn Woods, Lake Zurich, but also Bartlett, Naperville, Aurora, Plainfield, W. Chicago, Frankfort, and NW Indiana. These communities will experience a 400 to 900 percent increase—900 percent with train lengths—in freight train traffic. That is why there is bipartisan opposition to this deal in Illinois and Indiana including Senators Durbin and Obama, Reps. Manzullo, Roskam, Foster, Biggert, and Visclosky.

Last November, I requested the environmental impact statement and I thank the board for preparing the draft. Unlike the standard review performed by the STB, the EIS made this forum possible so residents could raise their concerns. Over the last several months, thousands of residents has been unprecedented as cited by all parties involved. Thank you to all are here tonight.

The intent of an EIS should be to balance priorities between issues of commerce and transportation with concerns with the safety, quality of life, and economies American communities. I and I know my constituents expect your federal agency to serve its interests.

Regrettably the recent draft environmental impact statement seemed to endorse allowing a private company to destroy local communities' quality of life, safety and economies, while expecting those communities to pick up the tab.

Specifically, it fails in scope and solutions. Fails the public by:

- Placing an egregious tax burden on local communities by expecting them to fund the vast majority of mitigation costs for a project they do not want and would not benefit from. \$40 million towards mitigation is laughable considering the costs are projected at well over \$1 billion.
- Fails to provide other options or review existing alternatives. Whether that is CREATE or a higher band rail system. We should not seek to move problem, but instead solve the problem.
- Identifies 15 at-grade crossings out of 133 when there are many more that need

improvements.

- Identifies 11 communities who would be cut off from their police, fire, and EMS providers who serve them, while offering no solutions or recommendations to ensure the safety of our communities.
- On safety, highway / rail accident rates are predicted in the draft EIS to increase by 28 percent on the EJ&E. Safety is number one concern.
- Refuses to evaluate the impact this proposed acquisition would have on the planned Metra STAR Line, which has wide bipartisan support because in addition to providing suburban to suburban commuter rail, it would also reduce utilization and costs of our highways while decreasing emissions. (Phil Pagano / Metra)
- Disregards the severe impact a 400 to 900 percent increase in freight traffic would have on the quality of life in our neighborhoods due to:
 - Dead locked traffic
 - Increased emissions and pollution
 - Noise Levels
 - Safety Concerns / Increased casualties
 - Thousands of children standing waiting in freezing cold Chicago winters while waiting for two mile long trains to go by so they can cross the tracks to get to school.
 - Economic Burden: Lost businesses, lost property value, and lost tax revenue. Municipal revenues decrease while tax burden increase.
- Randy Blankenhorn of CMAP specifically challenged the unsupported assumptions about likely freight traffic increases given high fuel costs, as well as misstatements about Amtrak or STAR Line service.
- Worse, the so called benefits are not certain, as the draft EIS only suggests a three year enforcement period, which means CN is not accountable to maintain any reductions in freight traffic in other communities or prohibited from increasing traffic in all communities. No firm commitments, just stated potential reductions.

I urge the STB to reject this proposed acquisition outright. If however you choose to allow this transaction to move forward, you should require Canadian National to fund and complete all needed mitigation as identified by our communities before any increase in freight traffic is allowed.

As this transaction has been initiated by and for the benefit of this private foreign company, their shareholder upside should not be paid for by American taxpayers.

The current process puts the interests of industry over those of American families and taxpayers. In September, I will be working to move legislation to change the process in order to better reflect American values by protecting the rights of our constituents and our communities.

The Surface Transportation Board has an opportunity to show America that a federal agency that they pay for can and will put the American taxpayer first. Please do!

Thank You.