

September 29, 2008

Phillis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Gentlemen:

We are writing to you to express our strong opposition to Canadian National Railway Company & Grand Trunk Corporation's purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad and to request that you consider all of the negative impacts upon the environment which this acquisition would cause. The effects of a 12,000 foot freight train running through the village of Barrington once every hour would be absolutely devastating to the health, safety and economic welfare of the residents and businesses in our community. How can you, as a board who we assume represents the interests and concerns of the United States citizens, allow a foreign corporation to disrupt and ultimately destroy our well-being and our environment. What adds insult to injury is that Canadian National expects our national, state and local governments to pay for most of the necessary mitigation.

We feel that the Barrington area has some unique issues with regard to the health of its residents. While many of the surrounding towns have their water piped in from Lake Michigan, the village of Barrington depends on a shallow aquifer system, and those residents just outside of the village limits have private wells. Any accident involving toxic or hazardous materials spilling onto and sinking into our soils could destroy our water systems. Considering Canadian National's poor safety record, this kind of disaster is a distinct possibility. Smoke from twenty-five freight trains a day will definitely increase air and noise pollution at a time when our citizens are working hard to lessen these problems. There certainly will also be a negative impact upon the natural environment. Mitigation at grade crossings would do nothing to prevent any of these threats to the health of our community, both human and natural.

There are serious safety concerns involved in CN's hourly freight trains crossing major village roads. Frequent freight traffic and very long trains will definitely interrupt and or prevent necessary ambulance service for critically ill patients. This becomes a life threatening situation for our Barrington area residents. Our police officers will be hampered and delayed when attempting to reach traffic accidents and other situations needing their immediate response. Our fire department response time will also be impaired, making it impossible to save burning buildings. Automobile accidents will definitely increase with the greater traffic backups caused by hourly trains crossing major north south and east west thoroughfares. The Barrington school district covers a huge area, serviced by a large fleet of buses. Those buses cross the EJ&E tracks almost eight hundred times a day, and waiting six to ten minutes for a freight train will cause serious delays and therefore interrupt the academic schedule. In addition, the potential for accidents involving buses, students in cars attempting to get to school on time and those children crossing the tracks on foot would be considerably increased.

The economic stability of the Barrington area would be in jeopardy if Canadian National is allowed to run numerous freight trains through it. Many merchants have already indicated that they will not remain in Barrington due to the disrupted traffic flow and therefore a loss of customers shopping and doing business in our village. When these merchants leave, our tax revenues will shrink, property values will drop, and the quality of municipal services and education will suffer.

The extreme negative impact upon the Barrington area and upon all the communities along the EJ&E rail lines, the destruction of their health, safety and economic welfare, is too great a price to pay for a rail company's improvement of operations. By approving Canadian National Railway Company & Grand Trunk Corporation's purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad, you put corporate profits ahead of the welfare of thousands of citizens and their environment. It seems to us that you have a moral and ethical obligation to refuse to allow this acquisition.

Sincerely,

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