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**STB DEIS Meeting August 27, 2008
Barrington High School**

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IMPORTANT!

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important matter!

I have been concerned about the Canadian National Railway (CN) proposed EJ&E acquisition from the first I heard it. Like hundreds of others in the area, I was at the meeting in the snow at the Makray Golf Club in Barrington and from what I learned and was told then and since, I vowed to fight this proposal as long as I humanly can.

The railroad is not in my backyard.....It is in my village, my community, my state and my country. As a citizen I felt obliged to learn as much as I could and the more I have learned, the more I feel strongly that this proposal cannot and should not be accepted by the Surface Transportation Board (STB). Many more eloquent people have spoken, but in good conscience I feel I must formally add my objections.

My reasons follow:

Geography:

Algonquin and Fox River Grove, Cary, Barrington and the whole suburbs east and west of the tracks in Barrington will see delays and back ups.

Some see it as a downtown Barrington problem. I see it from a much larger perspective. It is a national issue, one of great importance for this country. These trains are not helping our country to grow stronger as much as they help foreign interests. We are contributing to moving freight and goods at a high speed throughout our country with many attendant risks if this is permitted.

Move People not Freight:

Let's use the rails to get people on trains, not freight. There is a plan to expand the local train lines out to suburbs such as Harvard and McHenry and to the airports so people can commute via train and get on and off locally rather than using cars. It is called the Star Line proposal. We must support that option for EJ&E lines.

Our economy across northern and northwestern Illinois revolves around jobs for people, not jobs for manufacturing.

When we work in Chicago we meet daily with people whose jobs depend on rail lines to get to work. People from Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana commute daily to the hub of commerce in the Midwest: Chicago.

We love our trains and how they improve time spent getting to and from work in the cities and suburbs. We are fortunate to have the train lines for people. It is still a very long commute.

We need an investment in light rail that is faster and smoother and cleaner for people.

We do not need CN's trains competing for the routes around the suburbs.

Trucks:

The trucks that are on our local roads today are not going to stop rolling because Chicago has less international train traffic. There are no local sidings picking up manufactured goods or bringing goods directly to us in Barrington.

The initial arguments to support trains in our country had to do with helping people and the country prosper and expand, not helping foreign companies use our rails and roads for international transport.

We cannot be fooled by rhetoric about reducing local truck traffic or let one community get pitted against another. Chicago loses and we all lose if people cannot get to work each day.

Global Economy:

Yes, we do live in a global economy, but we do not have to destroy ourselves and get down to this potential level of pollution and probable hazardous materials spills in beautiful suburbs to even out the pain of the beautiful big cities that are train transportation hubs.

Local Economy:

CN does not plan to pay any significant cost for overpasses and/or underpasses and crossings.

We do not need the never ending construction in the towns along the EJ&E lines to be under construction even if they were willing to pay for the damage they would cause.

The burden on our local towns and emergency forces, gasoline emissions and costs and the train pollution are incalculable.

Safety:

The EJ&E train lines go by many high schools and grade schools.

We are going to have more children killed and more cars hit by these high speed behemoths.

Environment:

We will have significantly longer delays getting anywhere, which translates to more gas consumption, and less personal time, if we slow them down. If we do not slow them down, the train pollution gets worse. Hazardous materials are already a concern of CN in Canada and elsewhere.

What do we have to do: STOP them NOW!! This is our future. We cannot put the genie back in the lamp once it is let out!

STB Decision:

Once a decision is made, if it goes in their favor, the CN folks are ready to start rolling cars, whether we have rebuilt lines and intersections or not. I want to believe in this country and our elected and appointed officials. Three people in the east appointed by the President carry powerful control over our fate. Let them be guided by the highest principals of ethically working for the best interests of the people of this country.

Recent Reference:

Monster trains coming down the tracks?

Drivers stuck at crossings could see 2 miles of rail cars

By Richard Wronski | Chicago Tribune reporter

August 12, 2008

Call them freight trains on steroids, monster trains double-stacked with containers, long enough to block every rail crossing at the same time in some Chicago-area communities.

Many suburban officials fear the number of such lengthy trains will increase if a plan to divert transcontinental freight traffic through their communities is approved.

In Barrington, one of these 1.5-mile or longer trains could shut down all four crossings simultaneously, said Village President Karen Darch, who worries that even longer behemoths are in the offing.

"Some of these intermodal trains are 10,000 feet. You're talking [almost] 2-mile-long trains," Darch said. "That's really scary."

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-  [Longer trains may snarl more traffic Graphic](#)

Darch and other suburban leaders fear their towns will be perched on a railroad superhighway if the Canadian National Railway is successful in its \$300 million bid to purchase the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway. They worry that 20 to 40 of these super-size trains will roll through their communities each day.

Inevitably, trains of such sprawling length would lead to delays for motorists hung up at crossings, officials say.

Freight trains on the EJ&E now average about 2,600 feet, about half a mile long. But a CN presentation to analysts in June talked about trains that would run up to 12,000 feet—well over 2 miles long.

Longer, faster freights are the industry's watchwords, experts say. And CN says its plan to bypass Chicago's rail gridlock will mean fewer blocked crossings in the city and many close-in communities.

By using the EJ&E tracks, the CN says it can lower costs and speed the flow of Asian products from its port at Prince Rupert, British Columbia, to its Memphis distribution terminal and other destinations across the country. Ultimately, manufacturers and consumers will benefit, CN says.

Freight trains have grown dramatically longer over the years because of greater demand and technological improvements. There is no federal restriction on train length. The limits, experts say, are mainly logistical, such as the capacity of rail yards and sidings.

Normally, trains are assembled car by car in a freight yard, depending on the type of goods and destination. But an especially long train, one that exceeds the capacity of a rail yard, might require engineers to assemble two trains and hook them together, experts say.

For the last year, the BNSF Railway Co. has been regularly running trains topping 10,000 feet from Los Angeles to the railroad's huge intermodal yard at the former Joliet Arsenal near Elwood.

"More freight is shifting to the railroads because trains are the most fuel-efficient means of transport," said BNSF spokesman Steve Forsberg. "The long-term trend is, for good reasons, to migrate more toward using rail. But . . . how is the nation going to eliminate at-grade crossing conflicts?"

The many vocal opponents to the EJ&E purchase have raised that question repeatedly. While longer trains are a boon for shippers, they may be a pain for motorists trying to get to work, or for kids trying to get to school, or for emergency responders trying to get to a fire or accident across a blocked rail crossing.

The newly released report by the Surface Transportation Board concluded that motorists would face lengthy delays at 15 rail crossings in a dozen Chicago-area communities if the deal were approved.

The draft report also identified 10 communities along the EJ&E's 198-mile arc from Waukegan to Joliet and Northwest Indiana where drastically increased freight traffic could hinder emergency responses. The document underscored the need for overpasses and underpasses at many crossings.

Frankfort has six grade-level crossings along the EJ&E where trains would increase from six to 28 a day.

Mayor Jim Holland said he fears more and longer CN trains will mean more blocked crossings, noise and hazardous material passing through town.

"A super train brings super problems," Holland said.

In Plainfield, the CN's plan would increase the number of trains at 16 railway crossings from 18 to 42 a day, officials said. Instead of waiting for trains to pass every two hours or so, motorists there would have to stop about every 20 minutes, they predict.

Train length is only one factor in the crossing-delay equation. Another is speed.

CN says its trains will move through at-grade crossings at about 40 m.p.h. At that speed, a 6,000-foot train will activate signals and clear a gated crossing in just more than 2 minutes, the railroad said. A 10,000-foot train would take more than 3.5 minutes.

Holland said he doubts trains will travel through Frankfort as fast as the CN predicts.

The Illinois Commerce Commission's Operation Lifesaver estimates an average train moving at 55 m.p.h. takes nearly a mile to stop.

CN is awaiting approval from the transportation board to acquire the EJ&E. The agency will take more public comments in writing and at a new round of hearings Aug. 25 through Sept. 11.

A final decision is due in early 2009.

The report recommends several steps to reduce problems, including placing limits on train lengths. Other options involve scheduling, closing some crossings and building more overpasses or underpasses.

In making a case for the sale, CN points out that Chicago and many suburbs will see a sharp decline in freight traffic. A long line of towns from Vernon Hills to Schiller Park will see trains decrease from 19 a day to 2.

Although critics say shifting trains from one community to another doesn't solve Chicago's rail-congestion problem, others say the CN plan is a realistic answer.

Christopher Barkan, a rail transportation expert at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, says using the EJ&E as a bypass "will convert an underutilized transportation asset to a much more useful link in the national transportation network."

Barkan said public officials who have lined up against the CN proposal are being short-sighted.

"I understand people in Barrington will see an increase in freight train traffic, but there are millions of people in Chicago who will see a decrease in the same trains every day," he said. "We live in a world of trade-offs. This is one time in which the positives vastly outweigh the negatives."

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