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Virginia L. Strong
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January 25, 2008



.....Urgent Message.....

Dear Chairman Nottingham:

I wish to go on record as being opposed to CN Railroads' Petition to the STB regarding Finance Docket #No. 35087, Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation - Control - EJ & E West Company.

This petition would result in stranding Amtrak and its users and therefore effectively eliminate the City of New Orleans which operates daily round trips between Chicago and New Orleans, and the Illini and Saluki, which is funded primarily by the State of Illinois, which together provide two daily round trips between Chicago and Champaign, Centralia, and Carbondale.

I support Amtrak's recommendation on the new route known as the "Grand Crossing Route" which would be an alternative should the Air Line Route be eliminated. However, no such route elimination should be granted until such time as the Grand Crossing Route can be fully funded and is completed.

Over 400,000 people use Amtrak into Union Station annually. Not providing access to Union Station would result in a serious economic set back for all of Illinois and would be of particular hardship to the thousands of students in the Champaign and Carbondale area who rely upon this service daily. There would also be significant negative environmental impact due to personal transportation, which would not doubt be used in lieu of more environmentally friendly Amtrak service.

Downstate communities such as Centralia who have 15,000 Amtrak passengers annually would be dealt an additional economic blow to its already struggling regional economy. This is a regional issue affecting all communities in proximity to Amtrak service points throughout the State of Illinois.

I therefore respectfully request that CN's position in this matter not be granted until such time that the acceptable heretofore mentioned alternative is in place.

Respectfully,

Virginia L. Strong
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Surface Transportation Board
CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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