

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Johnson-Bal

12/15/07

Facilities & Services

Physical Plant Service Building
1501 South Oak Street
Champaign, IL 61820



Surface Transportation Board

395 E Street, S.W.

Washington, DC 20423-0001

RE: Docket Number 35087

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) hereby gives Notice of Intent to be a Party of Record regarding the CN Railroad application to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) for permission to acquire the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern RR (EJ&E). This acquisition could lead to an interruption or discontinuation of passenger rail service between UIUC and Chicago, as well as other downstate locations. Without this train service to Chicago, many of our students would have no access to their homes, and many of our faculty and staff would have no access to our Chicago campus.

CN's application indicates that they intend to remove all through freight from the St. Charles Air Line route, which is the route that the Illini, Saluki, and City of New Orleans trains use to access Chicago Union Station. UIUC is concerned that this freight route change may ultimately lead to a change in the available routes for passenger trips. A degradation of service due to losing quick access to Chicago would definitely result in a loss of ridership, and that could result in the eventual loss of the entire service.

Without direct efficient rail service to Chicago, those of our students who cannot afford alternative methods of transportation will be unable to visit their homes during the school year. Our faculty and staff that go to the University of Illinois at Chicago for events and collaborative

projects will be unable to travel as efficiently. Fiscal Year 2007 ridership of the Illini/Saluki trains was over 19,000 people per month, so there will be a considerable number of people directly impacted by this potential closure.

Additionally, UIUC is actively working to increase pedestrian safety on campus. To that end, reduction of automobile use is of primary concern. Students and staff who currently utilize the Amtrak passenger rail service to and from Chicago, would likely decide to bring a car to campus, if the train is no longer an option. Thus, increasing the cars on campus, and jeopardizing the safety of our students.

UIUC understands the need to address freight traffic congestion on rail lines in Chicago; however, it is vital that passenger rail service is continued without delayed service to downstate Illinois. UIUC recommends the creation of a connection at the location known as Grand Crossing, which would allow for the eventual abandonment of the St. Charles Air Line, without damaging the passenger trip experience for our students, faculty, and staff.

Cordially,



Morgan B. Johnston

Transportation Demand Management Coordinator

Facilities & Services, Campus Services Division

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Surface Transportation Board

CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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