

Phillis Johnson-Ball
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

RE: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

I am employed by the North Shore – Barrington Association of REALTORS®. Our Barrington-area REALTORS® maintain unique and intimate insight into the community. Better than most, REALTORS® understand why people choose the Barrington-area, and, more specifically, why people choose specific geographic areas of the community.

Our member-REALTORS® say people are drawn to the Barrington-area for the quality of life the community offers, including an inimitable quaintness and community character. In fact the Barrington-area communities have been planned to preserve this character. Commercial real estate has also been planned to reflect the community character.

The community has not been planned in a manner to accommodate increased rail traffic that will surely occur with a Canadian National (CN) Railway acquisition of the EJ&E Railroad. The residential market will likely see decreased demand and the retail within the commercial market, which heavily relies on intercommunity support, will likely see business diverted to less congested areas.

Unfortunately, the Draft Environmental Impact Study has failed to alleviate their fears. Most notably the DEIS:

1. Provided no review of alternatives to the deal, including CREATE;
2. Failed to assess likelihood of taxpayer investment in expensive mitigation funding as the basis for a pie in the sky mitigation scheme;
3. Provides contradictory capacity conclusions as it relates to interference with other railroads and commuter service;
4. Examination of the EJ&E freight capacity is based on CN's operating plan rather than a full Right-Of-Way capacity review thereby minimizing the potential for increases in freight traffic beyond what CN will now tell us;
5. Accepts the benefit to current CN line communities at face value with no long-term guarantees;
6. Does not outline regional benefits, therefore CN's contentions are accepted without proof;
7. Uses unsubstantiated and unsourced data leaving the public with no understanding of whether any of the analysis is valid because much of it can't be vetted;
8. Mistakenly assumes that impacted communities know what can and should be mitigated and that they actually have negotiating power against CN;
9. Fails to look broadly at indirect and cumulative effects beyond the region;
10. Gives false assurances on the Metra STAR line that can't be backed up by the reality of CN's operating plan.

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11. Minimizes Metra commuter rail service disruptions;
12. Completely ignores northwestern Indiana's expansion of commuter rail service;
13. Provides incorrect vehicle traffic counts;

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14. Uses outdated noise assessment methodology;
15. Downplays life and death first responder impacts;
16. Minimizes increased risk of hazardous material spills and ignores CN's deplorable Canadian safety record;
17. Ignores housing value impacts;
18. Ignores regional business impacts;
19. Ignores consequences to local tax bases for communities along the EJ&E;
20. Uses contradictory CN data in assessing air quality impacts;
21. Does not assess increased fuel usage and its impacts on the environment.

This deal should be rejected; at the very least CN must be forced to pay for mitigation.
Thank you for your consideration.

Paul Stegmaier
NAME (Signature)

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NAME (Print)

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