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September 26, 2008

VIA: Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested

Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball and Board Members
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: STB Finance Docket #35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball and Board Members:

This letter is one family's request that the Board vote against Canadian National's current petition to acquire the EJ&E line around Chicago. I am a railroad buff - photographing railroad equipment and facilities, paying attention to freight cars as they go by a crossing and traveling to see trains. I have even been fortunate enough to ride in a Rock Island switch engine and tour the old EMD LaGrange, IL plant before it closed.

We bought my home 13 years ago near the EJ&E tracks ONLY AFTER asking and learning that 5 or less trains per day (only 1 late at night) transited this portion of the line. Our home is some 220 feet from the tracks. We passed on the opportunity to purchase a lesser priced house some 70 feet from the tracks. We tolerate these 5 trains even though the sound of the pulsating diesel engines, the rumble of the passing trains and the occasionally louder-than-thunder sound of clashing couplers is sometimes louder than the level of human conversation or the sound from the TV. From prior experience, 15 or 20 or more trains each day is far too many!

Most importantly, have you ever see what happens when a high speed freight literally sucks in a person standing too close at a protected grade crossing. I have and cannot forget it decades later.

Increased traffic would:

- > substantially infringe upon our ability to receive prompt fire, ambulance and police services (our 2 nearest means of crossing are grade crossings;)
- > significantly intrude upon our ability to maintain a undisturbed existence within our home during the day;

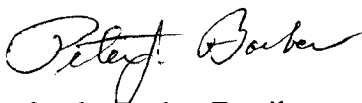
- > frequently arrest for substantial amounts of time, our uninterrupted travel to local shopping and community activities; and
- > continuously prevent a peaceful night's sleep.

You may ask, as Representative Bill Lipinski has supported, why should not the citizens currently affected by this volume of freight traffic be granted relief while EJ&E's neighbors are burdened. The answer is quite simple. Those people now living near this traffic have lived there their entire life, have passed on opportunities to relocate and decided to stay, or have bought their homes knowing of the heavy traffic on that line. Please read the enclosed magazine article from a recent issue of Model Railroader magazine.

A century and more ago, when rail lines were being planned throughout the country, local businessmen and prominent citizens often raised money to influence the railroad to pass thru their community. The reasons were to bring prominence to the community, increase transportation facilities and enhance its ability to attract new investment. This no longer applies. Increasing traffic will decrease the desirability of the community and lower average family income thereby discouraging new investment. Should CN be allowed to run more trains, our nice home in a pleasant neighborhood will be sold. Our family uprooted. As families all along the EJ&E route begin to experience the complete impact of the intended increased traffic, home values will likely plummet further and local property taxes will be more adversely affected. Please imagine yourself and your family being severely interrupted several times a day, repeatedly and sometimes violently awakened 5 or more times per night. The next time you are stopped near a crossing, roll down the car windows, smell the exhaust fumes from the raucous engines and feel the earthquake-like rumble of a long freight. Do you want to experience this 20 or more times each day? **Please, vote no!**

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,


for the Barber Family

cc: Senator Richard Durbin
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Barack Obama
713 Hart Senate Office building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Milessa Bean
318 Cannon house Office Building
Washington, DC 20005

John Tolomei, President
Village of Lake Zurich
70 E. Main Street
Lake Zurich, IL 60047

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Village of Barrington
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Railway Post Office

Eric Stelpflug



Imagine watching with your kids playing in the yard on a warm and sunny day while a Soo Line S-2 locomotive roars by. David Popp photo

Living within ear shot

The caption for the above photo on page 62 in the June issue asked "How many of us would love to have a house this close to the tracks?"

I have lived less than 50 yards from a busy main line for 40 of my 64 years, and while I have always loved watching the trains, you can believe me that it is not always an unmitigated pleasure.

In the old days, when steam was still king, there was a passing siding right behind my boyhood home, where the engines on northbound freight trains would stop.

If it was a particularly heavy train and the fireman had been on his toes, the engine would invariably blow off steam from its safety valve, and at night this would be enough to make us stand upright in our beds. A few minutes later, the train would start moving with a blast from its stack and a crash from its couplers, which would wake us again if we'd been lucky enough to fall asleep after the treat from the safety valve.

In the daytime, I often heard my mother using foul language when she had just hung out the washing in our garden, and along came a northbound freight on the passing siding with the engine belching forth clouds of soot from its stack.

Today, freight trains thunder past our home at speeds exceeding 60 mph. If a train is hauled by a modern electric locomotive, you

can actually go on watching TV without turning up the volume.

But if there is a GE class 66 diesel doing the honors, which is the case with about every third train, our house will shake and the cups will jump off our coffee table. And if the wind is from the west as it normally is here, the stench of diesel fumes will seep into our house for 10 minutes after the train is gone.