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DEBBIE HALVORSON
SENATE MAJORITY LEADER



April 1, 2008

Anne K. Quinlan
Acting Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

RE: STB Finance Docket No. 35087, Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation – Control EJ&E West Company

Dear Ms. Quinlan:

We are writing to express our opposition to Canadian National Railroad's (CN) acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railroad (EJ&E) as currently proposed and ask that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) take our views into consideration when proceeding with STB Finance Docket Number 35087.

Canadian National's acquisition will have a serious impact on the day-to-day lives of Illinois residents and families across this state. On top of traffic congestion and safety concerns, the plan stands to threaten property values and the quality of life of working families who are already being hit hard enough. It also jeopardizes long-term plans to spur economic growth and ease traffic congestion throughout Northeastern Illinois.

The current proposal would increase freight traffic in some communities by 400 percent. This is an enormous safety hazard given that many communities are unaccustomed to and ill-equipped to handle increased freight traffic. Illinois already suffers from a high rate of accidents at railroad crossings, and more traffic will only exacerbate the tragedy.

Furthermore, CN President E. Hunter Harrison has indicated that CN is willing to invest just \$40 million to build overpasses or underpasses at intersections along the EJ&E. That amount would enable us to improve 3 or 4 crossings at best, yet there are at least 140 crossings along this line. We would like to know how CN plans to address the needed upgrades to ensure the safety of local residents. We certainly hope they aren't looking to local, state, or federal taxpayers money to support this private transaction.

The EJ&E cuts through some of Illinois' – and the nation's – fastest growing communities. Leaders in these areas are working to guide this growth carefully and intelligently in order to protect the quality of life of their residents. CN's proposal is in direct contrast to those goals. The increased noise pollution, air pollution, and traffic congestion on already over-crowded roads hinder the quality of life and also

323 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62706
TEL: 217-782-7419
FAX: 217-558-2068

241 W. JOE ORR ROAD
CHICAGO HEIGHTS, IL 60411
TEL: 708-756-0882
FAX: 708-756-0885

388 E. COURT STREET
KANKAKEE, IL 60901
TEL: 815-929-1133
FAX: 815-929-1155

threaten to lower property taxes in these areas. Given the current state of the economy, any further financial hits on middle class families can have a long-lasting, detrimental impact.

Illinois leaders have dedicated significant time and resources to alleviating traffic congestion and shortening commuting time for residents in Northeastern Illinois. The result is Metra's STAR Line (Suburban Transit Access Route), the first-of-its-kind project to connect suburbs to suburbs, providing 1.2 million residents with new access to mass transit. This project would not only spark economic development and enhance quality of life, but it would also make the Chicago area more accessible for the proposed 2016 Olympics.

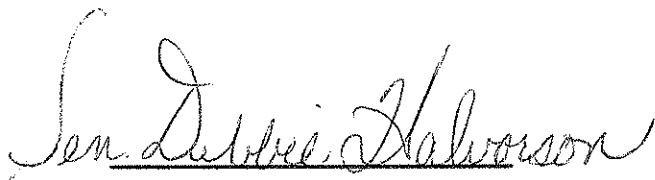
However, the STAR Line's 55-mile route would utilize a corridor running approximately 36 miles along the EJ&E railroad. Any increase in freight traffic along this track would likely require Metra to build additional track to operate commuter trains, increasing proposed costs and delaying completion. This additional cost would come at a time when the state of Illinois is struggling to meet the current needs of our regional transit system. We ask the STB to require Metra and CN to provide an accounting of the increased costs to the STAR Line as part of any environmental analysis.

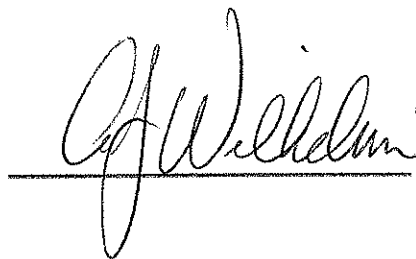
CN's proposal would also threaten Amtrak service between Chicago, Champaign and Carbondale, including routes that have had the greatest increase in ridership of any Amtrak route in the national system—a 67.4 percent increase. Compromising these routes would almost certainly jeopardize further Amtrak expansion in Illinois and devastate the Illinois communities along the routes.

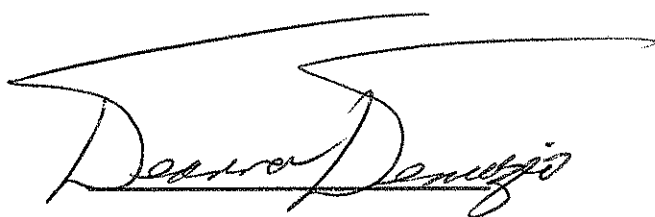
We understand that Canadian National is looking to ease freight traffic congestion in Chicago. But their answer is not a solution. Their proposed answer simply shifts congestion from Chicago to the suburbs and creates scores of new problems in the process, problems that could be devastating for many hard-working Illinois families and their communities. These problems must not be taken lightly.

At this point, Canadian National has not demonstrated a willingness to meet the needs of the communities along the EJ&E, provide long-term commitments to the region, or guarantee full cooperation with the proposed STAR Line and current Amtrak service, which leads us to oppose the acquisition as it stands today. We look forward to working with the STB as the process proceeds in setting up field hearings across the state to further examine this acquisition and allow for our constituents to continue expressing their concerns.

Sincerely,


Sen. Debbie Halvorson


J. Williams


Debra Denzjo


J. Williams

W. E. Lee Michael French

Linda Holt Christine Bodger

M. J. Ry Samuel Atkoff

Ray L. Velt M. J. Mac
