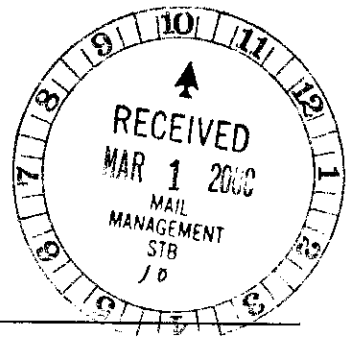


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BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
March 10, 2000



EX PARTE NO.582

Canadian National Railway proposed merger with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

STATEMENT OF THE BUFFALO NIAGARA PARTNERSHIP

My name is Natalie Harder. I am Director of Regional Development with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, with offices at 300 Main Place Tower, Buffalo, New York. The Buffalo Niagara Partnership is a membership organization of 3300 businesses located in the eight counties of Western New York and the Niagara Peninsula of Southern Ontario. These "Niagara marketplace" employers represent 200,000+ individuals. Many of our members are active in international trade, logistics, bi-national warehousing, and other commercial endeavors.

I am here today to support a full and fair review of the Canadian National (CN) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) merger, which will be before the Board throughout the coming months. As with other mergers in the past, this one deserves to be judged solely on its merits. We ask today that the Board fully examine the potential this merger presents for competitive benefits for shippers and our region. It is critically important for the Niagara marketplace that this or any other merger not only enhances a stable rail situation in the Northeast but aids in the economic growth and revitalization of our communities.

Mergers such as CN-BNSF that will increase rail competition in Buffalo and throughout New York are critical to retaining and increasing jobs and economic development in the region. Due to diminished rail competition following the division of Conrail, along with the resulting rate and service problems, the Niagara marketplace is already severely disadvantaged in attracting and maintaining industries that rely on rail services.

Any benefits to shippers and surrounding communities provided through the CN-BNSF merger should not be hindered on the basis of vague theories about future rail industry changes. Additional competition and service choices for rail customers and shippers in our region are already long overdue.

Therefore, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership recommends that the Board gather and evaluate all facts surrounding this transaction in order to move the process forward on a reasonable and fair schedule. In this way, the Board will continue to protect the best interests of Western New York, the State of New York, Southern Ontario and their respective shippers.

We appreciate this opportunity to address the Board. Thank you.