

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 20, 2008

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

**RE: Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation
Control—EJ&E West Company (STB Finance Docket No. 35087)**

Dear Ms. Quinlan

We are writing to request that the Section on Environmental Analysis (SEA) of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) schedule additional public meetings to receive comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern Railroad (EJ&E) by Canadian National Railroad (CN). While we appreciate SEA scheduling eight open houses and public meetings along the EJ&E corridor, we are concerned that many of our constituents will be unable to attend a public hearing for several reasons:

- (1) There is not a meeting location convenient to their community
- (2) The nearest scheduled meeting conflicts with the Democratic National Convention during which Illinois' Junior Senator will accept the nomination of his party for President of the United States
- (3) The venues chosen for the meetings may be not large enough to accommodate all our concerned constituents

As noted by those involved in this proceeding, the level of input from interested parties has been unprecedented. Between December 21, 2007, when the SEA published its notice of intent announcing the start of the scoping process, and February 15, 2008, when the comment period ended, approximately 2,600 people attended one of the public scoping sessions held at locations throughout the Chicago region, and over 3,600 people registered comments with the SEA. Since the close of the comment period, the affected communities have formed a broad coalition to advocate their collective interests on the proposed acquisition, which leads us to believe the public interest will increase significantly during the comment period for the draft EIS.

Unfortunately, the current schedule of open houses and public meetings does not reflect the anticipated increased interest of residents in the communities impacted. The schedule leaves many of our constituents without an opportunity to participate in the public meetings SEA is holding throughout the region. Many families will be unable to travel to meetings in other communities thus forfeiting their ability to testify before the SEA on their concerns with the proposed acquisition and draft EIS.

Furthermore, the public meetings scheduled during the week of August 25, 2008, conflict with the Democratic National Convention. Illinois residents from across the political spectrum are interested in witnessing Illinois' Junior Senator accept the nomination of his party for President of the United States. Not since 1956 has a major party presidential nominee been from the State of Illinois. Residents will be forced to choose between viewing the convention and attending their scheduled public meeting. This conflict will decrease expected turnout and disenfranchise thousands of our constituents.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the SEA schedule both additional meetings in communities that currently do not have a meeting scheduled and additional meetings in or near communities that have public meetings scheduled the week of August 25th. Given SEA and STB's stated position that the open houses and public meetings will allow all interested parties to express their thoughts on the draft EIS and pending transaction, we believe it is necessary that the board grant our request.

Sincerely,

Dick Durbin

Melvin J. Bean

Judy Biggert

Bill Foster

Pete Papp

Donald A. Mangione

CC: all parties of record