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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

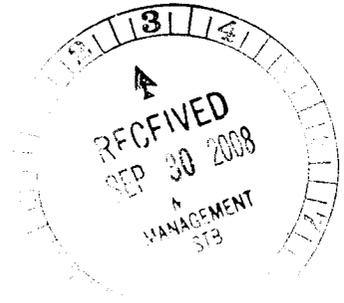
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Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423
Re: STB Finance Docket No. 35087

Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball,

I am writing to convey my comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Canadian National Railroad's (CN) proposed acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway (EJ&E). I appreciate the attention you are offering this proposed transaction given that the EJ&E roughly forms the western boundary of my Congressional District. At the same time, it is my hope that we can work together to ensure that matters of tremendous importance to my constituents are offered a more thorough review and that my constituents are offered appropriate mitigation measures.

The mitigation proposed in the Draft EIS was inadequate for the impacts described. A railroad can generally point to advantages it brings to a community to outweigh the impacts of increased traffic. Here, the STB has predicted a 28% increase in accidents along the line, hundreds of jobs lost in the region, an increase in emissions, and an increase in fuel consumption. Freight traffic is supposed to bring jobs and conserve fuel—we get neither of these benefits.

Further, the STB acknowledges that substantial obstacles will face completion of the STAR Line, but has not offered any recommendation for pursuing the completion of this revolutionary mass transit system. Gas prices are squeezing families today, and congestion is clogging our roads—we need new and alternative forms of transportation. The STAR Line will provide that, and I believe there must be increased attention paid to the need to preserve this important transportation alternative. So far, we have only been offered CN's word that they will consider the STAR Line in the future.

The STB should provide greater attention to what has gone into the STAR Line project thus far, and provide assurances that the project will not be cast aside. It is necessary that the STB provide this greater clarity because of CN's record of communication with my constituent communities. In particular, the Village of Bartlett has struggled for years with CN in an effort to work out solutions to CN repeatedly blocking major state roads for long durations.

The Village of Bartlett is further impacted as it holds one of the 11 fire and emergency medical providers that could face substantial difficulties coping with emergency responses. This month, the village is set to open a brand new fire station at a cost of nearly \$5 million. CN using the EJ&E will severely hamper this station's ability to serve the village, as its service area is split by the EJ&E tracks. The mitigation measure proposed to remedy this situation, that CN create a hotline where communities could call to resolve blockage situations, is wholly inadequate. Even minutes for our first responders at these grade crossings could turn unfortunate accidents into catastrophes, or injury into death. The mitigation recommendation is of no comfort to the Village of Bartlett that has toiled for so long with Canadian National over one of its existing lines on which the railroad blocks major intersections for inordinate periods of time.

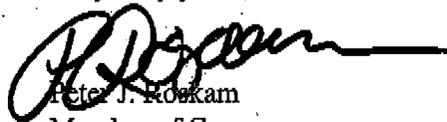
Indeed, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has expressed grave doubts about CN's proposal to acquire the EJ&E. CMAP is a land-use and transportation planning agency with a seven-county regional view. CMAP has expressed opposition to the deal thus far because CN has not made any commitments about long-term reductions in traffic on certain lines, nor has it made any guarantees to see through to completion the STAR Line regional commuter rail project long in the works using the EJ&E.

The community impacts of this proposed acquisition are severe. The Chicagoland area has recognized the need to update its rail infrastructure. The CREATE Program was the fruit of a long deliberation among public and private stakeholders to provide a plan to update the rail infrastructure and move trains through the area more efficiently. It is disappointing that this proposal could supplant the long and arduous planning that produced the CREATE plan.

My constituents and I realize the benefits rail transportation offers to our country. It's a fuel efficient form of transportation that has provided local benefits to my constituents on the numerous rail lines crossing our district. We certainly have benefitted from access to rail for shipping goods from our strong manufacturing base. However, we maintain grave reservations. CN has not been a forthcoming or good-faith negotiator, and the mitigation proposed by the Draft EIS offer inadequate protections for the health, safety and welfare of my constituents.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, or require further information, please feel free to contact David Mork on my staff at 202-225-4561.

Very truly yours,



Peter J. Roskam
Member of Congress



The Honorable Peter J. Roskam Member of Congress

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COMMENTS: _____

