



Barrington Area Council of Governments

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November 12, 2007

Ms. Victoria J. Rutson
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Ms. Rutson,

I am writing in my capacity as the Executive Director of the Barrington Area Council of Governments (BACOG). BACOG serves the greater Barrington area, including the villages of Barrington, Barrington Hills, Deer Park, Lake Barrington, North Barrington, South Barrington, and Tower Lakes, plus Cuba and Barrington Townships. The region's 35,000 residents are contained in parts of the four counties of Lake, Cook, McHenry and Kane.

BACOG is a regional planning organization that was created in 1970. The BACOG Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for BACOG's policies and programs, guiding conservation and development within the area through its goal of "a balance between conservation, preservation and development, which responds to the needs and desires of BACOG area residents, and is supportive of the unique qualities of the BACOG environment". The Plan links the BACOG area's goals to those of the region as a whole. The organization also researches and maps the area's groundwater resources; administers the regional GIS mapping program; provides legislative advocacy for local needs; provides training to local officials; and addresses community services issues.

Having served as Executive Director for over seven years and lived in the BACOG community for over 20 years, I can affirm the importance of regional planning and environmental protection to this area. These tenets have produced a 90-square mile area that is unique for its beauty, character and protected open spaces. Within the density and sprawl of the larger metropolitan area, BACOG is a green component of the whole that contributes to better air quality, recharges the aquifers that supply drinking water, shelters rare species of plants and animals, and provides recreational and open space opportunities for residents of the region, for example. Developed areas rely on planned growth, quiet neighborhoods, limited traffic, and safety throughout the transportation system to preserve the development-to-environment balance and to protect the public.

It has come to my attention that Canadian National Railway Company seeks to acquire the Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern Railway Co, which operates a rail line that runs through the Barrington area. I

would urge the Surface Transportation Board to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for this transaction. The transaction will have a significant impact on noise levels throughout the region, and it will significantly increase traffic congestion and impair grade crossing safety at intersections with Ela, Cuba, Lake Zurich, Route 14, Hough Street (Route 59), Lake Cook, Otis and Penny Roads. It will impair traffic flow for the Union Pacific Railroad commuter line including the station in Barrington and at its three intersections with the UP. The planned growth in rail traffic will interfere with the ability of emergency responders such as police and fire to reach their destinations and protect the public. It will disrupt other public services such as waste collection, snow plowing and school bus routing. Rail traffic-induced gridlock threatens the functionality and future viability of the entire region.

The transaction will negatively affect the goals and objectives articulated in the regional BACOG Comprehensive Plan and BACOG's ability to meet transportation and other goals of the plan due to infrastructure changes and traffic congestion throughout the region. It will also affect the comprehensive plans of the individual municipalities and townships and hamper their ability to implement their plans. Because our planning is linked to regional plans outside BACOG, these significant changes could compromise our community's ability to perform on these other agreements. Certainly, the major changes to the railroad property itself and resulting traffic, air quality, noise levels, etc. could also affect plant and animal habitat, possibly rare and endangered species, migratory/local wildlife patterns, and groundwater recharge areas.

As it is your statutory duty to consider environmental and transportation impacts, I again urge the STB to prepare an EIS for this transaction. Only the rigorous review required by the EIS process will develop alternatives and mitigation procedures sufficient to limit the anticipated impacts. This review should include impacts of the transaction further into the future than the three years Canadian National currently estimates, so that the longer view can take into account major changes expected in our region for future generations. Without an EIS, the BACOG area will not have the information necessary to prevent a severe degradation in the local environment. The scope of study for a draft EIS should emphasize the impact on noise; traffic congestion; safety at grade crossings; emergency services and other municipal/public services; protected natural areas; native plant and wildlife communities; groundwater recharge areas; local comprehensive plans including patterns of development, traffic goals, and economic development.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues to the residents and communities of the BACOG area.

Sincerely yours,



Janet L. Agnoletti
Executive Director