

Coalition Responds to Hunter Harrison
Monday, February 18, 2008

In response to the February 13th article in the Chicago Tribune, Coalition leader Bruce Sauer responded to CN CEO Hunter Harrison's claims that the region is "selfish" for opposing the proposed acquisition of the EJ by CN. We don't know if his letter will be published, so we thought we'd share it directly with other opponents.

In response to the February 13th article, Canadian National officials willing to share rail crossing costs if deal approved.

The article quoted Canadian National (CN) CEO Hunter Harrison as willing to pay their "fair share" of mitigation expenses. What exactly does that mean?

If this acquisition is approved it will have a detrimental impact to dozens of communities including increased congestion, negative environmental impacts, decrease in property values, loss of business and most importantly- jeopardizing public safety. While CN likes to boast that many communities will benefit by seeing a decrease in train traffic -- the fact is the same amount of freight will be back on those lines in less than three years as other railroads fill that vacated capacity.

CN plans to pay \$300 million dollars to purchase EJ pending approval from the Surface Transportation Board. In the article Harrison says when referring to paying for needed grade separations that the "bulk of the cost would have to come from the federal and state governments." Why is a foreign company pledging our federal and state tax payer dollars to pay for mitigation expenses that they will cause? Are American citizens supposed to fund a welfare system for foreign companies?

CN is choosing to engage in this acquisition because it stands to make millions of dollars -- so much, in fact that the \$300 million cost of the transaction with U.S. Steel will be paid for in one operating year just by projected increased revenues alone! In contrast, they would like to have American taxpayers foot the bill for infrastructure improvements for years to come.

If this travesty of a deal can't be stopped because there are no American laws that can protect American communities from foreign corporate interests, then CN should pay for the total cost of building infrastructure that will help to ease the economic, environmental, safety and traffic concerns of impacted communities. Here's what this boils down to. A Canadian-based company wants to continue making record profits at the expense of local communities and they want us to pay for it?

Hunter Harrison, what are you thinking?

Bruce Sauer

President, North Barrington

Member, Coalition of Barrington Communities Against CN Rail Congestion