

North/Northwest

Coalition of suburbs releases report critical of CN

Group has compiled list of complaints, says railway not complying with requirements

By Gary Gibula Special to the Tribune

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A coalition of suburban communities opposed to increased freight train traffic has sent [Washington](#) officials a report alleging an "alarming" number of violations by [Canadian National Railway Co.](#)

The Regional Answer to Canadian National, or TRAC, recently sent the federal Surface Transportation Board a letter detailing ongoing complaints and safety concerns related to CN's purchase of train tracks previously owned by the defunct Elgin, [Joliet](#) & Eastern Railway. The rail line rings the perimeter of the Chicago suburbs.

"We are asking the (Surface Transportation Board to) increase oversight to make sure that CN is making public safety in our communities a priority" and that CN is complying with the board's mitigation requirements, Karen Darch, TRAC co-chair and Barrington village president, said in the statement.

So far, TRAC officials said, 494 complaints detailing delays at train crossings, noise violations in quiet zones and signage and environmental concerns, among others, have been received.

The group's letter to the Surface Transportation Board also cited seven train derailments and 15 grade crossing delay complaints, including some where an ambulance with lights flashing had to divert to another route.

In addition to requiring CN to provide monthly safety reports and quarterly environmental data, the Surface Transportation Board has asked communities and groups like TRAC to submit their own audit reports.

A spokesman for CN said the railway has been forthcoming in meeting Surface Transportation Board requirements.

"Canadian National continues to move forward with the full integration of Elgin, Joliet & Eastern rail line into its network, and that includes providing the Surface Transportation Board with all data and information requested as part of the decision authorizing the purchase," said Patrick Waldron, a CN spokesman.

The Surface Transportation Board, he said, outlined a five-year reporting and monitoring period; in the first year of that period, CN is complying with all of the requirements.

CN has offered mitigation in the form of funding for noise berms, residential window replacements, track improvements and other measures.

At least 14 communities have accepted CN mitigation funding and have signed agreements stating they no longer will voice any opposition to the rail purchase.