

Feds: Scrutiny of CN and EJ&E to continue

Marni Pyke Daily Herald December 17, 2014

Federal regulators Wednesday extended by two years oversight of the operations of the EJ&E Railroad, now owned by the Canadian National Railway.

In December 2008, the Surface Transportation Board approved CN's request to buy the smaller EJ&E, which extended in a half-circle from Waukegan to Joliet. Suburbs traversed by the EJ&E fought the plan, citing extra freight train traffic. The board imposed numerous conditions on CN as a result and included a period of federal scrutiny until Jan. 23, 2015.

That monitoring will now continue until Jan. 23, 2017, the STB ruled. One reason for the decision came from concerns about freight congestion in the Chicago region and an escalation in train traffic.

"Given that the potential impacts from higher rail traffic levels led the board to institute oversight in the first place, in our view it would not be appropriate to end our oversight at a time when the pressure to avoid Chicago is greater due to increasing congestion levels," the board stated.

Sen. Dick Durbin said CN's expectation the merger would reduce crossing delays hadn't transpired. "The data -- thousands of blocked rail crossing and lengthy delays -- just doesn't support their claims," he said in a statement.

Previously, CN CEO Claude Mongeau argued that safety was the railroad's highest priority and promised "we will continue our efforts to contain crossing delays."