

CN's Chicago traffic delays increase

(The following story by John D. Boyd appeared on The Journal of Commerce website on October 19, 2009.)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Canadian National Railway said its trains blocked roadway crossings eight times during September when trains stopped for 10 minutes or more along the suburban Chicago rail line it recently acquired. Two of those blockages lasted more than an hour.

In its latest monthly report to the Surface Transportation Board – part of the regulator's unusual level of oversight imposed in its December approval for CN to buy Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway -- CN said stopped trains along EJ&E tracks increased from four during August, plus two more long delays at crossings that stemmed from other types of train operations.

Until September, CN had steadily curbed its incidents of stopped-train roadway blockages since taking control of EJ&E tracks early this year.

The carrier only reports road blockages that last at least 10 minutes, when trains stop across the intersections and block area drivers, so the report does not cover shorter road traffic interruptions or vehicle delays from slow-moving trains at crossings.

CN also said the September blocked-crossing incidents included one on Sept. 18 lasting 69 minutes at Oswego, Ill., and another at Sauk Village, Ill., two days later for 63 minutes. The rest ranged from 25 to 38 minutes in various Chicago suburbs.

The company attributed them all to mechanical problems that stopped rail traffic. The trains involved were long ones, ranging from 104 to 162 railcars.

The monthly CN reports to the STB can be found at:
<http://www.stbfinancedocket35087.com/html/monthlyreports.html>.