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Boone County is a small county with prime farmland and deep ties to agriculture. Agriculture is one of the most important industries in Illinois. Ag-related industries contribute billions to the state's economy. If this railroad goes through Boone County there will be 32 miles of track. I believe, the information given was, 24 acres is needed for each mile of track. Therefore, Boone County will lose 768 acres of land. In Boone County there are at least 50 Centennial Farms and four Sesquicentennial Farms. Farming plays a major role in the livelihood of Boone County. More than 50 families have lived and farmed in Boone County for over 100 years. The railroad divides eight of these farms that have filed for centennial or sesquicentennial status. We need to preserve farmland to feed the people of Illinois and the world. Farmland is not something we can go out and build, or create. The land we stand on today was created centuries ago. If land is taken out of production for development it cannot easily be returned for agricultural use.

The railroad intersects 35 roads, three major highways, six streams, two Conservation areas, and a major highline. People use these roads in many ways. Farmers use these roads for transporting grain, chemicals, supplies, and livestock. The trains would interfere with transportation and add cost to their operating expenses as they sit and wait for the freight train to pass through their fields and the roads they travel.

According to Frank Patton, chief executive officer, and Jim Wilson, president of Great Lakes Basin Railroad, there is a claim of economic benefit, in terms of job creation. They also inform us that the railroad has the potential to take a million trucks off the highways. The *Tribune* article informs us that the Union Pacific would be unwilling to use the proposed by-pass. Why? Possibly, they don't want to short haul their traffic, therefore reducing the amount of mileage, for which they are paid. There are other alternatives for reducing the congestion in Chicago. A possibility of an interchange in Kansas City or St. Louis would be helpful. Patton says the cost for the Great Lakes Basin Railroad will be between 6 billion and 8 billion. However, if this endeavor fails, taxpayers will be stuck with the fallout. If you read about the railroad industry and their earnings, one will

note that in the fourth quarter, for 2015, freight volume dropped. Union Pacific furloughed 3,900 workers and put 1,400 locomotives in storage. Does this sound like job creation for our community?

Our community – Railroad Safety. The state of Illinois has the second largest rail system in the nation. 134 crashes occurred at public highway – rail crossings, resulting in 55 personal injuries and 24 fatalities in the state of Illinois, during 2014. Illinois ranks second in the nation in grade crossing fatalities. Over 67 percent of crashes occur at public grade crossing equipped with active warning devices. You want to add more railroad track to Boone County? This is the future for our children?

How about noise? Railroad employees wear hearing protection devices while riding the trains. Sound travels through a medium, such as air. Sound is a vibration. Sound travels fastest in the matter of steel. The temperature of air determines how fast sound will travel. In room temperature, sound travels 344 meters per second. Think of the wide open spaces in Boone County. The train on the tracks and the noise that is traveling loud, far, and wide.

I am sorry, I cannot see a benefit for Boone County. We are an agricultural based community that depends on our rural roads for a rural and long-lasting way of life. A million trucks off the road, would have an impact on Boone County economically. Safety of the citizens of Boone County is put at greater risk, due to the increase of additional railroad tracks. Please consider my points and those of my fellow citizens – does the Great Lakes Basin Railroad improve our community? My answer is NO!

Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Charlesworth