

ROBERT L. VARNES AND ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS

EI-24207

Mr. David Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Docket No. FD 35952

Environmental Scoping Comments to
Great Lakes Basin Transportation Proposal

Dear Mr. Navecky:

I encourage the **denial of this proposal.**

With a projection of 110 plus trains per day, the chance of a toxic or **volatile materials spill** risks increases substantially.

These include:

- Oil
- Chlorine
- Liquid Hydrogen
- Propane
- Hydrogenous Ammonia
- Explosives

As the saying goes "if something can go wrong, it will". We must act on that assumption as should you. Tanker derailment risks will increase with the large portion of traffic proposed in this plan.

The proposed rail line will cross the Fox River southwest of Sheridan, Illinois running east, north of 3959 Road, passing between the prison

and the bulk tanks stored at the northwest intersection of E2603 (the North-South county road to Sheridan). These tanks contain oil and propane.

In the event of a derailment, toxic fumes from the damaged tankers will cause the **evacuation of the prison population**. Timely evacuation of 2100 inmates is impractical if not impossible - 42 buses plus chase cars would be required to relocate the inmates to other facilities.

Getting the transportation for this task would take hours.

Secondly, the **closing of a rural access road** will increase the response for mutual aid from other Departments and increase the run time to the hospital. This effects the "loop" road southeast of Sheridan (E2650 and, E2601). Mutual aid fire and ambulance travel will increase by 8 to 10 minutes and ambulance run to the hospital will increase at least by 5 minutes. Trained personnel and equipment – even aided by surrounding Fire Districts are not sufficient to handle a spill into the Fox River or a calamity of toxic wrecked containers. MABAS Division 25 would take hours to assemble a Haz Mat team.

Also important, the **quality of life** will be diminished along the 280 mile run. Farm land here is some best in the State if not the country.

The **project is not needed**. The "rail congestion problem" is being studied and dealt with by experienced railroad companies and personnel better to deal with rail traffic than a group of private investors. The attraction (especially near Kankakee) to the investors appears to be the **profit from the sale of properties** along the rail right of way.

Sincerely,


Robert L. Varnes, architect

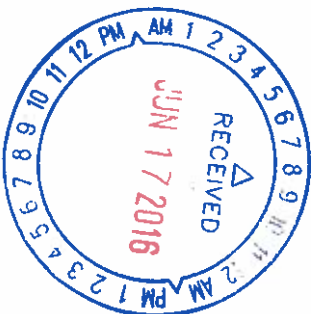


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