

EI-23291



Great Lakes Basin Docket No. FD 35952

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June 1, 2016

ATTN: Docket # FD 35952

Mr. Dave Navecky

Surface Transportation Board

Docket No. FD 35952

395 E Street, SW

Washington, DC 20423-0001

Mr. Navecky,

Those of us who are in the path of the GLB route have been viewing much information concerning the proposed Great Lakes Basin rail project. No matter what I read I believe the GLB project has failed to provide sufficient documentation that supports public convenience and necessity. It seems that fast tracking this project and waiving the six months notification period was an error by all parties concerned. I ask that the Surface Transportation Board stop any further action concerning this rail project as soon as possible.

Chicago already has a designed plan with CREATE (the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency program) to deal with improvements with rail lines, local, state and federal government to aid delays in the city. Daniel R. Elliot, Chairman of the STB, said in a letter dated July 13, 2015 that CREATE is improving railroad time in Chicago. GLB hopes to kill all gains made by CREATE and destroys this program. Both Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern have made written statements that they do not want to collaborate with the GLB group but wish to work with CREATE. The money already invested in CREATE should not be wasted.

The GLB project is a commercial plan designed by a for profit company. The project is not part of any federal, state or local long-term freight plan. The GLB group has not made its business plan available to prove public convenience, necessity or benefits. The Supt. Of the Cook County Dept. of Transportation and Highways has addressed the proposed plan and says it is not an answer to the overall transportation problem and that his office is proceeding with a comprehensive study of transportation issues that will address congestion and promote growth without the GLB.

None of their documentation describes actual need for the 50 foot utility easement except that they

can make money from it. It does not appear that the Surface Transportation Board has the jurisdiction to even approve the utility corridor that the GLB is requesting. The 15,000 acre Kankakee rail terminal is planned to take farmland to create a rail yard five times larger than anything now seen. Is this a true necessity or an inflated request?

It appears the current rail lines have no need for the GLB. The letter written by Norfolk Southern Corporation's attorneys (EI-22974 under FD-35952) shows that Norfolk-Southern does not have a nondisclosure agreement with GLB and doesn't wish to use this line proposed. The letter states they have provided no information about rail movement or traffic to the GLB group. Are there any non-disclosure agreements at all? Did GLB even do research on need for this project?

If anything the GLB has created a public inconvenience for a huge number of people living on the proposed line and thirty miles to either side as GLB suggests this route could still move. How many farmers can tile their ground, plan for future irrigation on the fields affected? None. Can you sell, upgrade, and enlarge your house, farm, business until the TSB comes out with a final statement in two to three years? No. This is a huge dilemma for those in the wake of this project. The thought of this rail line coming to fruition has destabilized the region economically and politically.

Boone County is where I farm. Fields, like mine, will be divided by this proposal. It will provide dangerous crossing for my tenants, my service people and myself. Productivity in these fields will be cut due to odd shaped parcels. I worry about soil compaction. My costs to farm will certainly go up. I'm dealing with tile and it is very expensive. I'm very frightened of what will happen to the tile lines on these farms effected. Value of homes and fields will decline along this route. Farming is a tight economy – losing even a portion of a field that you do not plan to sell is a major concern.

The loss of thousands of acres of farm soils is no public convenience. Our land in the path of this route is some of the best in the world. To stop work on prime farmland that is tilled to feed the world for a for-profit private company is NOT in the public's best interests now or in the future.

As many of my fellow farmers in Boone and other counties on the proposed route I've invested time and money in creating CRP (conservation easements) with the USDA. The government has spent much money in creating these programs and managing them over the years. Little did I imagine that the GLB rail would endanger all of these long-term efforts.

For these reasons and many more I believe the GLB project is totally inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity. This project was not reviewed sufficiently before starting the approval process and the public is suffering for it dearly. I ask that the Surface Transportation Board stop work on this project. As a taxpayer I am offended that my taxes and those of my neighbors effected by this plan are being spent considering such an unnecessary project.

Sincerely,

Lori A. Pepper

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