



*"The Tri-Creek School Corporation and Community ...
Engaged to Learn ... Equipped to Achieve ... Empowered to Succeed"*

April 8, 2016

Dave Navecky
Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 35952
395 East Street SE
Washington DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky:

The Lowell community is predominately rural. We appreciate the farmland and the three creeks that run through our community. These provide grounding in our community through a visual foundation in the familiar and pride in a shared heritage. Constructing a massive rail system through our community dissects that visual aesthetics. We value the rustling of the corn and soybeans, the intermittent lakes, creeks, and rivers, and the proximity to and relationship with nature and all that it provides for us. It may be difficult for folks in more populated areas to appreciate the uninterrupted vastness of farmland or to appreciate how the community has worked to bring back the wildlife along the Grand Kankakee Marsh. But we do and encourage you to find another route.

As Superintendent of the Tri-Creek School Corporation, I am writing to specifically ask you to address the proximity of the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line to Lowell Middle School. As we understand the map, the rail line will butt up against the western border of the middle school and along portions of the southern border before traveling south toward Belshaw. It also runs within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to Lake Prairie Elementary School. Our concerns regarding the proximity to our schools include noise and vibration, air quality and climate, student safety, student transportation, and economics.

1. Noise and Vibration

The potential of 110 trains going through there per day, even if designated a quiet zone, still has a considerable amount of noise and vibration. The middle school has close to 800 students who will be impacted daily. The land is flat, and there is a lot of wind in this area, which carries sound quite a distance, and which will cause a disruption in the learning environment, particularly for special needs children. Middle school students often find it difficult to focus and concentrate on a good day. They will find the noise a distraction and depending on the disability, a special needs child will find the noise too stimulating and anxiety provoking.

2. Air Quality and Climate

The potential for air emissions from trains would negatively impact the air quality of the area for students. We do not have much vehicle traffic in the area and no train traffic. The potential load of this rail proposal would significantly change that. Students with asthma may find it difficult to breathe. Again, an impact not only on learning, but on their health.

3. Student Safety

There is an increased possibility of spills and derailments with high speed rail. The proximity of the rail to the school makes this problematic as 800 souls will be immediately affected. The trains will be carrying hazardous materials that could jeopardize a generation of children in our community.

Train tracks are often found attractive by youngsters. We are familiar with several student deaths in neighboring communities when students walked the tracks to their homes. These rails are currently proposed to be close to our school and travel through a nearby subdivision where students might find it inviting.

The tracks run along our borders where students run cross country and play football. The noise would be loud enough to prevent students and spectators from hearing the announcers and/or plays. Additionally, the proximity of the tracks would result in a portion of the current property being off limits due to safety as we would not want students that close to the tracks when playing or running.

4. Student Transportation

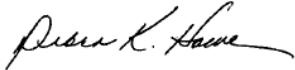
The proposed tracks would cut across some country roads. Some students currently ride the bus for an hour. Increasing student time on the bus would negatively impact their quality of life.

5. Economic Impact

We have a proposed solar field in the western boundaries of the middle school property. Trains so close to that area would be problematic should stones or other items be kicked up by the trains and thrown into a solar array. This would have a financial impact for us as panels are used to offset energy costs.

I strongly urge you to consider a different location for the rail line.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debra K. Howe", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Debra K. Howe, Ph.D.
Superintendent