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Valpo Scoping Mtg
4-12-16

Dave Navecky
Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington DC 20423-0001

35952

April 11, 2016

Dear Mr. Navecky and Members of the Surface Transportation Board:

I am writing to you concerning the recently announced plans for building a railroad which would begin in LaPorte County, IN and pass thru Porter and Lake Counties in IN and continue thru Illinois and into Wisconsin.

I would like to express my opposition to this proposed railroad. I am listing things that I personally think should be considered before proceeding with planning this project.

Personal reasons:

- Consumes family farm ground
- Blocks roadways between my home and emergency services, fire and hospitals
- Basic quality of life disturbed

Community concerns:

- Blocks county roads
- Transfers rural traffic (tractors, farm implements, grain trucks) to highway
- Noise pollution
- Proximity to schools
- Possible hazardous materials transported
- Possible derailments
- Volunteer fire departments are not equipped to handle emergencies
- Does not bring employment to Porter County other than maybe when it would be built
- Increases time children spend on school bus and busses having to cross railroads with many trains
- Effects on learning environment for students
- Changes surroundings which are a concern for special needs students and other people whose mental/emotional health relies on calm surroundings
- Destroys homes
- Proper planning sources were not consulted (NIRPC, RDA etc.) Does it meet any of the plans for future growth and development of the area?
- Quality of life disrupted

Environmental issues:

- Drainage, both in fields and waterways
- Drinking water pollution. No city water near proposed site.
- Disturbs balance of nature/wetlands
- Takes fertile farm land out of production

To elaborate on a few specific issues, I would like to address the drainage. On my

property, drainage tiles have been placed to remove excess water. If this tile is broken or torn out, it would not only effect the area where it is damaged, it would affect the surrounding fields, not necessarily in the path of the railroad. This could directly affect the productivity of the land. Excess water would also be transferred to existing waterways, streams and eventually the Kankakee River. Flooding is already an issue with the Kankakee and if more water were flowing that direction the danger/damage of flooding would increase. Additionally, the ground water may be effected, causing a problem for homes on wells, which most of them in this area of Porter County are.

Another issue that concerns me and a lot of my neighbors is the safety of school busses and farm equipment. Closing county roads will divert traffic to State Road 49. There is a lot of traffic on that road, add many trains crossing the road and the congestion increases dramatically. Farm equipment is slow moving and large. Many drivers are unaware of how slow it really moves and several accidents have taken place in the last few years without the interruption of trains crossing the road. Kids will be on busses for a longer time with the county roads closed and trains blocking the highway. I am personally concerned that the fire department and hospital are on the other side of the tracks and in those instances time is often of the essence.

The proximity of the tracks to several schools is alarming. The noise level will increase dramatically, making teaching/learning more difficult. I understand children and/or adults who suffer autism are disturbed by noises. Other emotional issues are also effected by noise. I will definitely be affected by the noise as the railroad will be within a half mile of my house. Should there ever be a derailment and hazardous materials involved, the schools would be hard pressed to evacuate the students.

I would also like to reiterate the fact that local planning boards and commissions here in Northwest Indiana have not been involved in the process of planning this extensive project which does affect many people now and in the future.

And, last but not least, the quality of life in these communities WILL be affected and in my opinion, it will not be for the better.

Please consider these things as you weigh your decision.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Emily Remster
368 East 400 South
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383