



United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service
Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha Nebraska 68102-4226

I.A.1(ER-16/0160)

Mr Dave Navecky
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW.
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky:

The National Park Service (NPS) has reviewed the Surface Transportation Board's Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Construction and Operation of a Freight Rail Line in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. The NPS offers the following comments and recommendations for your consideration:

Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. (GLBT) plans to file either a petition for exemption or an application seeking authority from the Surface Transportation Board (Board) to construct and operate an approximately 278-mile rail line. According to GLBT, the proposed rail line would extend from near La Porte, Indiana through Illinois to near Milton, Wisconsin. The GLBT states that the principal purpose of the proposed rail line would be to provide other Class I railroads (Norfolk Southern Railway Company, Canadian Pacific Railway Company, and CSX Transportation, Inc.), as well as a regional railroad (Wisconsin and Southern Railroad LLC) which utilize the Chicago metropolitan terminal area, with more efficient options to route trains around the city. The proposed rail line would allow freight traffic not destined for or originating in Chicago to bypass the existing congested Chicago terminal area, and add capacity to accommodate existing and reasonably anticipated future growth while avoiding major population centers.

The proposed railroad, near mile marker 99, is located on and/or adjacent to the historic Route 66. Former U.S. Highway 66, popularly known as "Route 66," is significant as the nation's first all-weather highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles. What sets this segment of national highway apart from its contemporaries is that it was the shortest, year-round route between the Midwest and the Pacific Coast. Route 66 reduced the distance between Chicago and Los Angeles by more than 200 miles, which made Route 66 popular among thousands of motorists who drove west in subsequent decades. Like other highways of its day, Route 66 reflects the origin and evolution of road transportation in the United States. Please consider the potential for effects to the setting, feeling, and physical integrity of Route 66 during the environmental analysis.

The NPS has a continuing interest in working with the Board to ensure impacts to resources of concern to the NPS are adequately addressed. For issues concerning Route 66 and the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, please contact Kaisa Barthuli, Route 66 Program Manager, National Trails Intermountain Region Office, P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87504, telephone (505) 988-6701, email Kaisa_Barthuli@nps.gov.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

 Cameron H. Sholly
Regional Director