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DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2017

FD 35952

CC: Michael W. Blaszak, Esq.
Attorney for Applicant
Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc.
23 860 State Line Road
Crete, Illinois 60417

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Public Record

Please advised this is your copy of a letter sent to the
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

The Diocese of Rockford is opposed to the proposal of the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. to construct a rail route through Northern Illinois. The Diocese of Rockford includes 11 counties in Northern Illinois and serves approximately 300,000 Catholic people in that area. Part of our service to those people is to provide them with a final resting place in our Catholic cemeteries and the security of knowing that their remains and the remains of their ancestors and loved ones will not only be cared for, but also left undisturbed in perpetuity.

The chosen route of the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. would be a detriment to our ability to continue to serve our constituents today with burial services offered at Calvary Cemetery, 8616 West State Street, Winnebago, Illinois and would eliminate our means of expanding that cemetery. The proposed route would also require, at public expense, that an additional road be constructed to access the property.

Of even greater concern is the impact this route would have on the ability for mourners and visitors to safely access the current cemetery property because of projected train traffic and disruption of current traffic patterns in and around the cemetery. We feel this route would greatly jeopardize the safety of those accessing the cemetery and greatly impact public traffic and safety during a funeral procession.

Our faith teaches us to be concerned not just for our own interests, but for the overall common good and we consider this proposed rail route to threaten the very safety and security of the common good here in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. The continuous rail traffic will create undue obstacles for first responders; create a negative environmental impact on neighboring farms and subdivisions (all located in less than one mile from the proposed route); and, have a **sustained and substantial** detrimental impact on the physical property of the cemetery, not limited to but including graves sites, monuments and mausoleums.

The Diocese of Rockford believes that any benefit projected by this rail project can and will never offset the negative impact on the common good and the numerous consequences that will be realized by the environment and public health and safety. Therefore, on behalf of Most Reverend David J. Malloy, Bishop of Rockford, and the Catholic people to whom we minister, I request this proposed project from the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. be denied by the Surface Transportation Board.

Sincerely,

(signed)
Penny Wiegert
Director of Communication
Diocese of Rockford Illinois