



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
 REGION 5
 77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
 CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590
APR 29 2016

Karen Ritchie
 3394 S. Paw Paw Road
 Paw Paw, Illinois 61353

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF: E-19J

Dear Ms. Ritchie:

Thank you for your April 11, 2016 letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the Great Lakes Basin Transportation Rail Project. As stated in your letter, I understand that you have serious concerns with project impacts, including: (1) the loss of prime topsoil, (2) noise impacts to communities, (3) accidental spills of hazardous materials contaminating soils and polluting the air and water, (4) disruption of the flow of water and flooding, (5) drainage tile breakage, (6) delays for emergency vehicles, (7) changes in the desirability of the rural community to new and existing residents, and (8) safety risks from railroad crossings and derailments.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is the lead federal agency for this project. STB will decide whether to approve the proposed project, approve an alternative version of the project, or deny the project. Under the National Environmental Policy Act, STB is conducting an environmental review to inform its decision making. The first phase of this process is called "scoping." During scoping, STB holds public meetings and seeks comments from the public and resource agencies. STB will accept comments until June 15, 2016. Information on how to file comments electronically is available at: http://greatlakesbasinraileis.com/public_involve.html. Written comments may be submitted to:

Dave Navecky
 Surface Transportation Board
 Docket No. FD 35952
 395 E Street SW
 Washington, DC 20423-0001

STB will use comments received during the scoping period to develop a draft "environmental impact statement," which is a comprehensive statement of the proposed project, reasonable alternatives, potential impacts, and protective measures. After this document is released, the public will have a chance to comment. STB will use those comments to develop a final environmental impact statement, which will also be available for public comment. STB will use the final environmental impact statement and all comments to inform its decision. The full environmental review process is described here: http://greatlakesbasinraileis.com/enviro_process.html.

EPA does not have authority to approve or deny this project. EPA is required by Section 309 of the Clean Air Act to review and publically comment in writing on environmental impact

statements. We will provide scoping comments by June 15, 2016, and we will comment at each subsequent opportunity. Public input and local knowledge are critical to the federal review process. Thank you for taking the time to inform us of your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
National Environmental Policy Act Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Cc via email: Dave Navecky, STB