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Scott Hendee
13372 Mary Lynne Dr
Rockton, IL
sahendee@aol.com

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Surface Transportation Board
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The newest “preferred” Great Lakes Basin train route announced in September 2016 cuts completely through Winnebago County, IL, and impacts long standing citizens in three states. It is life changing, to say the least, and an unnecessary intrusion.

Since this route was announced, our local townships (Shirland/Rockton, IL, etc.) and our county board (Winnebago) have heard the outrage from its citizens. **Our leaders voted to oppose this toll railroad route due to the great harm it causes on so many levels.**

Safety to citizens would be greatly impaired. The western half of Winnebago County will be negatively impacted and nearly cut off from emergency medical services in Rockford due to train traffic. That is all 3-major hospitals, longer response times for police/fire/EMT services, and critical emergency responses to potential derailments.

Environmental impact would be devastating to long term conservation strategies. Soil/water conditions on the route: includes major, interconnected waterways (Rock, Pecatonica, and Sugar Rivers). Ag disruption: loss of valuable farm land, soil irrigation systems, multiple rail crossings, road closings, and economic losses to family farms.

The proposed Great Lakes Basin railroad project would allow a private company to use eminent domain to take land for private economic gain. It will greatly disrupt long standing private property ownership along any rail route. Local governments/school districts will need to spend limited,

valuable tax dollars to realign roadways for school buses and emergency services vehicles to preserve the safety of our children and citizens.

The irreparable damage that will be done by this railroad project far exceeds the proposed benefits. In the 21st century, collaboration at every level is the key to success. The solution to rail congestion in the greater Chicago area is already happening. The public/private group, CREATE, has invested years and billions in capital to address the stated problem. **Your support of the CREATE initiative is the preferred solution.**

I urge the Surface Transportation Board to make a “NO BUILD” decision and let the CREATE group finish its work. Building and operating the proposed toll rail line is not consistent with the public convenience and necessity standard. Allow the citizens in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin impacted by these proposed rail routes to get back to being contributing, tax paying citizens in their local communities.

Scott Hendee
13372 Mary Lynne Dr.
Rockton IL 61072