

Herscher Community Unit School District No. 2

DR. RICHARD S. DECMAN, SUPERINTENDENT
SHELLY PARSONS, SPECIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR
PETE FALK, CURRICULUM DIRECTOR

May 19, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Navecky,

We are writing this letter on behalf of the Herscher Community Unit School District No. 2 to express our concerns regarding the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line proposal. Our school district is a large, rural district that comprises more than 250 square miles. In fact, we are one of the largest districts in land area in the entire State of Illinois. Despite this vast area, we have made it a priority to ensure that we do not have students on buses more than 60 minutes to or from school. Currently, we transport our approximately 1, 800 students with 37 regular bus routes in the morning and 37 routes after school. After an extensive review of the plans for the rail line, we have confirmed that the new rail lines will definitely increase the transportation time for our students to a level that is unacceptable unless we add at least 2-3 new bus routes. Every potential new bus route will cost our District approximately \$25, 000. Frankly, we cannot afford to add any additional routes due to a significant decrease in educational funding from both the Federal government as well as the State of Illinois.

In addition to the increase in travel time, we are very concerned about the loss in Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) of both property (farm land values) and home values as a direct result of the building of the rail line. Our District is 85% funded by local property taxes and any negative change in EAV has a significant impact.

Finally, we are also concerned with the safety of our students who may have to potentially cross the railways to get to a bus stop or to even drive to school. The close proximity of the proposed line to one of our facilities, Bonfield Grade School, which houses all our District Kindergarteners and First Graders; raises a monumental concern for safety should evacuation be required due to a catastrophic accident on the rail line.

"Education... The Ultimate Investment."

District Office: 501 North Main Street, PO Box 504, Herscher Illinois 60941-0504
District Phone: 815-421-5000 – District Fax: 815-426-2872

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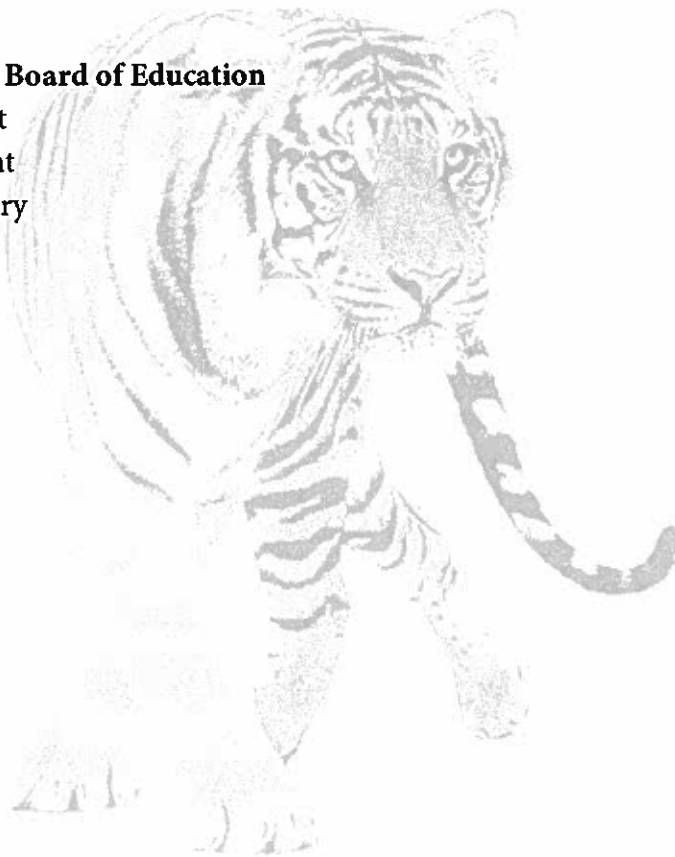
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As a public body, we have to weigh the positives and negatives of any new development to our school district. We do not want to stand in the way of development or in the way of potential new revenue as a result of the taxes paid by the railway. However, we feel that the issues created by the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line outweigh the potential benefits to our school district and the community as a whole. As a result, we urge you to either change the route of the rail line or to not move forward with the project. We thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact our Superintendent, Dr. Richard S. Decman for further information.

Sincerely,

Herscher CUSD No. 2 Board of Education

Dave Emling, President
Pat Daly, Vice President
Dale Huizenga, Secretary
Dave Ruder
Joe Powers
Sally Sullivan
Jason Hastings



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HERSCHER C.U.S.D. 2

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