

May 14, 2016

EI-24776

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

Mr. Dave Navecky,

I am concerned about the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line through Rock County. Two long-range factors have me concerned – pollution and safety.

The railroad would affect surface water runoff wherever bridges and underpasses are built. Turtle Creek and other areas would be negatively affected by runoff containing unknown pollutants.

The GLBR proposal includes a corridor for utilities. Can they be restricted to only running electric lines in this corridor? Or will they be constructing crude oil and/or gas pipelines, windmill generators? The route traverses prime land for frack sand mining. GLBR's web site states that they own all mineral rights to the land purchased. Who will be responsible for regulating these utilities and approving or prohibiting different types of utilities and/or frack sand mining being added in the future? If approved, can the approval restrict the utility corridor to electric lines only? The railroad cars will be transporting crude oil, ethanol, and various toxic chemicals. If the utility corridor is also transporting crude oil or ethanol, how will spills be cleaned up? Who will pay for the training and equipment needed to adequately respond quickly to an accident involving toxic substances?

Our state and federal government has been strapped with cleaning up environmental disasters and contaminated land from past mistakes and incomplete knowledge of the consequences of human actions. Let's learn from our mistakes. If the GLBR is permitted to construct this railroad, the permit should require an environmental cleanup fund be established. The GLBR should be required to put a set dollar amount into the fund before operations begin and be required to contribute a set percentage of gross receipts (not net income) into the fund each year. They must not be able to access this fund for any purpose other than cleaning up environmental disasters. Let's plan for the next 100 years ahead, not be caught short later.

The safety of every person living east of the proposed rail line will be affected. All police, fire, and emergency responders in Rock County are located west of the tracks. Many of our fire and emergency responders are volunteers. Their response time will be greatly reduced by trains delaying them from reaching the fire station before they can even begin traveling to the site of the emergency. How many robberies and deaths will occur because emergency personnel were stopped by a train crossing? County A is heavily traveled at 55 miles per hour or faster. How many drivers will fail to see the crossing lights in time to stop safely?

GLBR's web site states that their purpose "is to construct and operate a safe, reliable, and entirely new freight rail bypass around Chicago..." Routing the tracks through eastern Rock County does not resolve the rail traffic problem in Chicago. There are miles of under-utilized track already traversing Rock County. There is no reason GLBR cannot forge an alliance with another railroad carrier to upgrade one of these existing lines to accommodate additional rail traffic. Or they could join existing tracks running north to Milwaukee.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Kautz



Thomas G. Kautz
2818 N. Emerald Grove Rd.
Milton, WI 53563



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