

E1 - 22557

Lowel Scoping Meeting
April 12, 2016



Lake County Parks and Recreation Department
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"The Natural Place for Fun"

April 7, 2016

The Honorable Gerald J. Scheub
Lake County Commissioner, 2nd District
Board of the Lake County Commissioners
2293 North Main Street
Crown Point, Indiana 46307

Dear Mr. Scheub:

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department strongly opposes the proposed Great Lakes Basin Transportation rail line Chicago bypass for many reasons.

Buckley Homestead is a unique county park that combines educational, historical, and scientific research components along with the preservation of hundreds of acres of open space in an increasingly developing county for the betterment of all Lake County residents. These combined qualities create a distinctive experience that increases the quality of life and brings in tourism dollars that would be negated by a major railroad development disrupting the park and the surrounding countryside.

This project will expressly negate the purpose of the Calumet Astronomy Center (CAC), a collaborative partnership between the Lake County Parks, the volunteers of the Calumet Astronomical Society (CAS) and Purdue University Northwest (PNW). Purdue's Northwest Indiana Robotic Observatory (NIRo) telescope, housed at the CAC on the grounds of Buckley Homestead County Park, is a fully instrumented, research-grade telescopic facility directly serving undergraduate science education and research. It also complements and enhances CAS's Conway Observatory, used for public education of the stars, planets, constellations and the night skies. Both facilities expand an astronomical and educational presence in Northwest Indiana.

The tracks are planned to run through CAC at Buckley Homestead at between 50 to 100 feet of both observatories. Lights, noise, vibrations and overall disruption created by the railway will, in essence, shut down the two observatories, both developed through public support, donations, grants and a National Science Foundation grant.

In addition, Buckley Homestead County Park is a gift from the direct descendants of the original settlers given to the residents of Lake County to preserve our early Lake County heritage. Since 1978 programs have been dedicated to sharing the history of the family farm in south Lake County and teaching the importance of agriculture to tens of thousands of school children and their families. Hundreds of thousands more visitors have enjoyed the tranquility of Buckley, its programs and festivals; a quality that will be severely impacted with a rail line running through the site. Acquiring and preserving open space, preserving historic structures, developing educational programs and creating unique research facilities has taken many years of diligent efforts by many volunteers that could all be wiped away in a matter of months.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with some of the buildings being original to the site since the middle 1850s, Buckley Homestead County Park is a treasure that must not be destroyed.

It is the intention of the Lake County Park Board to officially pass a resolution opposing the Great Lakes Basin Transportation rail like Chicago bypass at the next Park Board meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Basala". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

Jim Basala, CEO
and Secretary to the Board

JB/wl