

Julie Newhouse

I serve as Secretary of the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau, which represents over 400 ~~farm~~ families in Boone County. Our mission is to: "Be the voice, resource, and advocate for farm families and agriculture, while promoting stewardship for today and future generations."

Today I would like to address just three of our many concerns about the proposed rail route. ^{insert}

First of all, we estimate the proposed route will consume at least 776 acres of land which represents 1% of all farmland in ^{Boone County} Boone County. ^{our}

~~Agriculture contributes nearly 4.1% of the county's economic output, which totals \$361.4 million. A 1% loss of land results in \$3.6 million reduction from our local economy. For a county the size of Boone, this is a significant loss.~~ ^{as stated earlier.}

This proposed route goes through our next-door neighbor's farm and our farm will not have acres taken by eminent domain- but we still may suffer from secondary health, safety and welfare effects-

in our valley, changed elevations and new bridges will create new flooding patterns,

damaged inter-farm tile systems may create new wet ^{areas} ~~spots~~ for us. five years after the pipeline- neighboring farms still had drainage issues.

Closed roads will cost us precious time

each crossing increases our safety hazards,

and ^{our} ~~our~~ shallow wells could become contaminated by hazardous spills.

Secondly, Boone County farmland is not "undeveloped", but rather represents over 175 years of devoted hearts and calloused hands, which developed malaria-ridden swampland into productive farmland. Water was channeled to be used wisely and allow this fertile ground to be tilled

and allow families to live and prosper here. Across our county one can see windbreaks, waterways, contours, and other erosion preventive measures all developed by generations of farm families.

Our comprehensive plan describes Boone County as the "last remaining stronghold of true rural character and intact agricultural lands in the Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison-Rockford diamond. Thousands of people travel to Boone County just to enjoy our fair, agri-tourism and niche markets.

Finally, Boone County's incredible aquifers are even sought by Chicago. We are devoted stewards of our water because our children and grandchildren are the first to drink that water. I have never met a developer from outside the county that has that kind of dedication to our water instead they plow through our waterways, woodlands, grasslands, wetlands and pastures which all help protect our precious water supply.

Please do not allow Great Lakes Basin a route that cuts through our agriculture zoned area, dissects over 150 farm parcels, and thus threatens to diminish our ability to have productive farms and safe water.

① We ~~are also~~ ^{are} concerned about development in the wrong places. Poorly placed railways could accelerate the loss of farmland as they promote industrial growth on agricultural land. We support development in areas zoned for development. The best possible social utility is not fulfilled by destroying prime farmland, specifically zoned and protected for agriculture.

We believe ~~the infrastructure~~ ^{a project} of this scope and impact should be sited where it has the greatest long term potential for public good and public development; and it should not be ~~shed~~ ^{approved} at all if for short-term economic benefits ~~and private profit~~.