

COMMENTS PREPARED BY THE KANKAKEE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

The following are the comments I made on behalf of the Kankakee County Farm Bureau at the public meeting in regards to the Great Lakes Basin (GLB) Railroad Project held at the Manteno Sportsmen's Club on April 11:

I first want to give you some agriculture facts about Kankakee County. The total acres of farmland in the county are about 342,000 acres. From the most recent census 17% of the county's economy comes from agriculture. In addition 1 in 12 jobs for a total of almost 4800 are because of agriculture. Finally, in a study done in 2015 by Decisions Innovations Solutions it was found that agriculture's output for the year was just over \$1.5 Billion.

At our March 21 board meeting, after much discussion and deliberation, with 12 of 17 directors present we voted unanimously to oppose the GLB Railroad Project. We had several reasons. The following were the most pertinent:

1. The GLB would be the largest RR project in over 125 years. We understand there is railroad congestion in Chicago but in 2015 the Amtrack Gateway Chicago Area Blue Ribbon Panel completed a report which offered many possible solutions. The GLB was not one of them.
2. GLB is proposing a 200 foot right of way, 50 of which would be sold or leased to utilities. We believe the Surface Transportation Board (STB) does not have the authority to grant this request.
3. As of now, no major rail carriers have signed on to use the GLB "toll line".
4. Agriculture in our county will be negatively impacted by a huge amount. We have estimated that the 200 feet of right of way across the entire county would consume 1000 acres. In addition, landowners will suffer severed parcels or worse, landlocked parcels. Most seriously is the proposed "Manteno Railport". This would include everything in the area bordered by Rt. 50 on the West, the Union Pacific (Grant Park) on the East, the county line on the North and 9000N (Manteno Rd) on the South. This area encompasses a total of almost 15,000 acres. The total of 16,000 acres is almost 5% of all of the farmland in the county. This loss could equate to \$69 Million from the county's economy and a loss of more than 200 permanent jobs.
5. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we fear many of the trains could be carrying hazardous or dangerous products. In addition many areas would be inconvenienced by stub roads, especially in the area of the railport where all of the roads would be stubbed. This would cause serious concerns for police, fire, snow plows and school buses in addition to the loss in revenue to all of the taxing bodies.

We believe our first choice would be for this project to go away. At the very least we request and STRONGLY urge that the STB deny any request for an exemption and give a FULL review to the project. If at the end of the FULL review it is determined that there is definite, measurable benefit to the area and state, then and only then would our board consider dropping our opposition. Until then we remain opposed.