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June 5, 2017

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To: Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Docket # FD35952

From: Kathleen Hendee
13372 Mary Lynne Dr.
Rockton, IL 61072

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad project.

My concerns are:

Accessibility: Many people in the south, west and northwest parts of the county and southern Wisconsin travel to Rockford for work, school, entertainment, shopping, and receiving medical care at one of three hospitals. With most secondary roads being shut down because of the railroad, those of us on the west side of its path will have an almost impossible task of getting to Rockford or anywhere else. Area school districts will be required to completely re-route their bus routes, adding to an already long travel time. (Current bus routes from the Shirland area to Hononegah High School already run around an hour or more for some students in the outlying areas.) How will rescue squads and fire departments be able to respond in a timely manner when most of the secondary roads are closed? Our very lives and property are being compromised and endangered by this railroad.

Property Values/Loss of Livelihood: Everyone is negatively impacted by this railroad whether you live near it or it runs through your property. There are many family farms that will be destroyed by this railroad, land-locking their fields, disrupting their livestock, making portions of their farm unusable. These farmers will no longer be able to make a living to support their families and grow food for the rest of us. Some larger family enterprises that will be directly affected are Edwards Apple Orchard West, Williams Tree Farm, Rivers Edge Campground, and Copperstone Inn to name a few.

For the rest of us that are near the railroad, our property values will plummet. We have faithfully paid our taxes, invested in and improved our property, only to have it rendered worthless by this railroad. Who wants to live near a train route that will have constant traffic, noise, is inconveniently located because of road closures, and holds the possibility of a derailment?

Safety: There has been precious little information forthcoming from Great Lakes Basin Railroad concerning what they will be hauling but we know it will be freight, probably in

the form of oil and possibly hazardous materials. The effects of a derailment in this area would be catastrophic. If a derailment should happen, it is not just a matter of cleaning it up. It means, depending on the nature of the spill, there would be mandatory evacuation possibly all the way into the west side of Rockford for an indefinite period of time. Should any hazardous material get in to our aquifer, our water will be unusable for many generations if not forever. Our homes and property again face the grim reality of becoming worthless. The proposed route crosses the Rock River twice (once in Winnebago County and again in Rock County, WI) the Pecatonica River once and numerous creeks and streams. Should a derailment occur near or while crossing one of these rivers/streams, the effects would be felt downstream which includes Rockford and beyond.

Environment: Winnebago County and area private institutions such as Natural Land Institute have been key in acquiring, developing and preserving green spaces in the outlying parts of the county now affected by this railroad route. The Sugar River, Pecatonica River, and Rock River corridors provide important sanctuary for nesting and migrating birds. Nygrens Wetlands and Ferguson Forest Preserve (also wetlands) are each about a mile from the proposed route. These are important stopping off sites for thousands of migrating birds such as white pelicans, sandhill cranes and even whooping cranes, one of North America's rarest birds. The Kishwaukee River and Kilbuck Creek in the southern part of the county are unique environmental areas that also would be negatively impacted. The damage that would be done by disrupting this environment is unthinkable and would not be correctable should this railroad be allowed to build. Please don't allow this proposed railroad to undo all the time, money, and progress that has been invested in building up this part of Winnebago County to make it a mecca for diverse wildlife and migrating birds.

Please render a decision to Great Lakes Basin Railroad of **No-Build**. We are not interested in pushing this nightmare of a plan onto another community. Thank you for your time and consideration.