



Great Lakes Basin Rail Line

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

EI-24861

How Do I Submit Comments?

- **Written Comments:** Complete and submit this form at a public meeting, or mail your comments to the Surface Transportation Board's address at the bottom of this page.
- **Recorded Comments:** Provide your comments to a court reporter at a public meeting.
- **Electronic Comments:** Submit electronic comments by visiting the Surface Transportation Board's website, www.stb.dot.gov, and clicking on the "E-Filing" link and then clicking on "Environmental Comments."

Please refer to Docket No. FD 35952 in all correspondence addressed to the Surface Transportation Board. The comment deadline is ~~May 16, 2016~~ July 15, 2016.

Attached please find a four page listing of my comments regarding the environmental issues, which would be created by the construction and operation of the "Great Lakes Basin Rail Line".

This project ~~should~~ ^{never} be permitted to enter Kankakee County, Illinois and destroy it's precious, irreplaceable resources.

NOTE: When an individual chooses to submit an Environmental Comment or some Other Submissions, his or her personal contact information is considered public information and is shared within and outside of STB without additional authorization.

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Comments may be submitted today or mailed to:

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
ATTN: Docket No. FD 35952
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

1. The GLB Railway will render useless thousands of acres of prime farmland which will be needed to continue to feed the increasing population of this country and the world. Our area has always been considered prime farmland and is an extremely productive part of "America's Breadbasket". If climate change is forthcoming, as all of the experts will testify, other areas of lesser productivity might become totally barren, and this fertile land would be desperately needed. We should be working on methods to preserve such acreage, not take it out of production! Additionally, many fields will be split into pieces, some of which will be so small as to effectively reduce their ability to produce. Soil compaction will be increased and maneuverability will become an issue with the large farm machinery used today. Other split parcels will become inaccessible when the railway cuts off their road ingress/egress.
2. Similarly the destruction of even a portion of one of the best parks in the State of Illinois, Kankakee River State Park, would be a travesty. There are fewer and fewer such places where families can go for little or no money for recreational purposes or just to enjoy uncorrupted nature in a healthy, unpolluted environment. Undoubtedly there would be significant ill effects to the tree, plant, and animal life inhabiting the parkland due to noise and other forms of pollution emitted by the trains' engines and potential leakage of materials being transported. This is a fragile, old growth habitat, the entirety of which should be protected at all costs. (I have a personal connection to a portion of the parkland, which was owned by my family many years ago and was annexed to the park.)
3. Many lives will be adversely affected by this railway and the accompanying massive 25 square mile (15,000 acre) rail yard. Homes, farms, and occupations will be lost, causing enormous mental, physical, economical, and environmental stress to individuals; families; and even their pets and other animals. The economy in Kankakee county and other affected areas is not conducive to providing happy, healthy, prosperous replacements for these losses. What will these people do? How does one replace the history and traditions of a life which has seen generations of his or her family live, grow, and prosper on a special piece of land, farm, home, or locality and be able to pass that heritage down to each new generation?
4. Construction of the GLB rail bed will cause soil compaction problems in the surrounding fields. Compaction damages the soil structure which affects the way water, nutrients, and air are distributed to plant roots thereby decreasing crop production. It also increases susceptibility to soil erosion. What will happen to all of the irreplaceable top soil which will be removed to construct the rail bed? Where will GLB procure the enormous amount of materials needed to prepare the rail bed and fabricate the large number of proposed road

crossings? Tons of prime soil will also be lost to erosion during this process and for years to come due to the alteration of the existing soil structure. Removal of existing trees will cause loss of windbreaks and accelerate erosion.

5. The rail bed will create an unnatural rise or grade in the land on either side which will obstruct the natural flow and drainage of water. This interruption will cause ponds or pools of stagnant water to form and further damage surrounding areas. Flooding with significant soil erosion may result as well as severe problems with mosquitoes and other insects. Wherever there is stagnant water, disease may follow. (For example, our property, which is on a hill, faces the proposed rail bed. Since the rail bed will be above grade, water will collect in front of us because the natural path of drainage is in the opposite direction toward Rock creek and the Kankakee River. That path will be blocked by the raised rail bed.) All of the above problems with stagnant water would even escalate if existing field tiles are broken or crushed during railway construction or even later during activity in their right of way areas which are to include utility right of way. (I personally have seen and experienced issues with broken field tiles, and these problems will not ever go away on their own. Some areas and fields are already prone to flooding issues, and all of the concerns will increase when the railway slices through and blocks existing field waterways.
6. Our area, which is very close to Rock creek and the Kankakee River, is home to an enormous variety of wildlife. There is a small flock of wild turkeys that are trying to establish a home. At this point, they are in a fragile state and are easily upset. Wild turkeys have not been in the area for over 100 years. Multiple high speed trains along with their noise pollution would be detrimental to them and the other bird populations which include cardinals, blue jays, doves, blue birds, pheasants, duck, geese, woodpeckers, finches, chickadees, red winged blackbirds, robins, owls, crows, sparrows, etc. Our local deer, raccoons, possums, foxes, and many others would fall victim to high speed trains. I have even spotted a pair of wolves crossing our field and the field through which the railroad is proposed to run. Multiple species of wildlife would be negatively impacted by the construction and the constant passage of high speed rail traffic.
7. Another set of problems will originate with road closures and the installation of railroad crossings. According to the proposed route, there will be 6 crossings within ½ to 3 miles from my home and field. The noise from whistles and the racket of trains passing in front of my house every 15 minutes, night and day, will drive us insane and be equivalent to torture. I have spent the most part of 70 years living in this quiet, peaceful, and serene area. School buses and our children will require additional road time before and after school. Pick-up time in our area is already 6:45 A.M. God forbid there should ever be an accident with a bus full of children crossing the tracks. More time will be required every time I leave or return for a trip to the store, Dr.'s appointment, post office, dinner out, or anywhere for

that matter. People will be constantly rushing to try to beat the train that is seemingly never-ending. How many accidents will that cause? Speaking of accidents and emergencies, how much longer will the response time be for police, fire trucks, and ambulances; and how long will it take to get to the hospital -- long enough to make the difference between life and death while waiting for a train coming and going?!

8. References to emergencies bring to mind another set of life-threatening circumstances — contamination from train cars leaking hazardous materials and train derailment! Agreeably these are bad situations no matter where they happen, but they would be terribly devastating in this area. Oil and chemical spills would cause permanent damage to area soils, making them unfit for any crop production forever. Ground (including wells) and surface water would also be contaminated. People in rural areas rely on their private wells to provide safe, potable water for themselves; their animals, crops, gardens, and all plant and animal life. Without potable water, life is not possible! The proposed GLB railway route also crosses the Kankakee River which is the biggest source of recreational activity in this county. People also come here from distant locations to enjoy boating, fishing, camping, swimming, water skiing, canoeing, hunting, picnicking, trail walking, and exploring the river; it's shoreline; and caves. Hazardous material spills would kill the fish and the wildlife which depend on water from the river. The downstream town of Wilmington, IL also draws their water from the river. Imagine the resulting disaster if a derailment of cars transporting toxic substances were to occur while close to or crossing the river. Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See, an Illinois 4-H camp for children, borders the Kankakee River State Park and Rock Creek. It offers camping sessions for week-long (including overnight) with a variety of outdoor activities, adventures, and nature education. The GLB proposed route passes very close to their camp and crosses the road close to their location. It would be a horrible disruption, disturbance, and potential danger to their campers and programs.
9. Currently, the view from my living room, kitchen, dining room, and two bedrooms is a quiet, peaceful, idyllic, serene, gently rolling field with a scenic backdrop of the beautiful and stately trees which border Rock creek and the Kankakee River State Park. If the GLB railroad is constructed, that beauty will be entirely destroyed and eradicated by railroad bed grade. The noise and vibration pollution caused by the nearly constant procession of railroad cars will ruin my life and property. The monetary value of my home property and field will drop like a rock. My entire life as well as my son's and grandchildren's are entwined with this property and township. My family beginning with my great, great, grandfather (7 generations) have lived and farmed within 2 miles of my current property for nearly two hundred years.
10. According to reliable sources such as the Chicago Tribune and the Illinois Farm Bureau, none of the major existing rail carriers are interested in paying for and using the services which

would be provided by the Great Lakes Basin Railway. If these companies are not interested, why would this railway be needed at all?

11. If it is proven without a doubt that this railway is an absolute necessity, the route should be changed to go south of Kankakee, perhaps into Iroquois county. I would not wish this on anyone's location; however that area has less of a population which would be affected by the project. Furthermore, that route would not endanger such a valuable natural resource as Kankakee State Park. There is also a growing demand from Chicago and its suburbs for locally grown food products for individuals, stores, restaurants, and farmers' markets. This area is the best location for producing such items. Many of the existing railroads were built alongside existing roadways which lessened the impact to such huge portions of fertile land, unlike the GLB Railway project.

There seems to be no end to the various environmental issues connected to the construction of the GLB Railway. Hundreds of questions are going unanswered regarding this project, particularly by the private corporation which bears responsibility for it. The public has seen no responses whatsoever regarding solutions to all of the environmental issues which are being addressed, nor to other inquiries about their financial backers; the types of materials to be transported; and contingency plans in case of project failures among others. Who will pay for the containment, clean-up, and on-going damages from material spills and derailments – GLB or the area government (i.e. the local residents). GLB Railway is a private corporation with foreign investors out to get rich at the monetary and environmental expense of the public.

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