

May 28, 2017

Surface Transportation Board
ReL Great Lakes Basin Railroad

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I fully oppose construction of the Great Lakes Basin Rail Road (GLBRR).

My reasoning is as follows:

1. GLBRR, Frank Patton nor anyone else associated with the project has shown any experience or ability to successfully finance, build or operate a railroad.
2. The names of the investors and financiers of GLBRR are being shielded (hidden) from the public. This “shielding” sets a tone of non-transparency of the finances, business plan, ethics and ability of GLBRR to operate in a legal and above-board manner. What is being hidden at this early stage? Politically connected investors? Organized crime money? Drug money? There is no transparency in this proposal!
3. No coherent business plan seems to be in place. First it was going to go through Boone County and cost \$8 billion. Now it is proposed to go through Winnebago County and cost only \$2.8 billion. This is not a sign of a coherent business.
4. No need for this railroad has been shown by any planning committee at any of the communities it will affect.
5. The rail bottleneck in Chicago is already being addressed by the Chicago “CREATE” plan.
6. The rail “bottleneck” in Chicago has a very minor, if any, effect on the general public. Certainly not worth disrupting numerous communities, school districts, fire protection districts, businesses and family farms over.
7. The customers targeted by GLBRR for their railroad have shown no support for it, nor made any commitment to use it. Two have publicly stated they will not use it.
8. The rail industry is in a state of change. Some of the rail industry’s biggest customers are changing their shipping patterns. The oil industry has gotten approval to build pipelines to move oil more efficiently and safely than by rail. Coal is out of favor, mines are closing. Grain is being shipped more and more by barge. The railroads themselves are using better computer programs to move their trains more efficiently and more quickly. Net effect: Less and more efficient of rails, helping to relieve bottlenecks, including Chicago.
9. On 07/12/2016 the Surface Transportation Board responded to a letter from the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning that was supportive of GLBRR. It is now the end of May 2017. Some of the **endorsee’s** of that letter are no longer in office, IE: Rockford Mayor, Winnebago County Chair. It has been almost a year since that letter was written, and GLBRR’s plans have become much more widely known. Strong opposition to GRBRR has developed in Rockford, Il and surrounding communities, and many community leaders who originally supported the concept of GLBRR have changed their position.

10. The purported need for the GLBRR is to speed up rail traffic, so trains will not be stopping at communities along the way. Therefore little, if any, economic benefit will come to the communities being disrupted by GLBRR.
11. I had a business at the Chicago Rockford International Airport for over 30 years. The airport didn't make use of the existing railroad along its entire eastern boundary during that time. They still are not using it. Why do they now suddenly need / support a parallel railroad on their west side, which is mostly flood plain?
12. The GLBRR comes before the Surface Transportation Board with a solution to a problem that the general public will not receive any measurable benefit from. The GLBRR doesn't have any customers, experience or viable plan. GLBRR can't decide where to put its tracks. Its purported investors are invisible. (Are there really any investors?)
13. If GLBRR is given railroad status (and eminent domain authority) what else could be built in the right-of-way they acquire? Pipelines? Powerlines? Windmills? Tollway?
14. The proposed plan for this railroad cuts farms in halves, leaving farmers with portions of their farms unusable due to the smaller size of the land to use with large machinery that cannot feasibly fit on the smaller land tidbits. It would also require farmers to find a route around the railroad path to even get to these smaller tidbits of land.
15. Public services, such as fire protection, ambulance service, and school buses will be deeply affected by the closing of roads used currently in order to accommodate a railroad for private investor income.
16. In closing, I say that something about GLBRR just doesn't seem right. What's REALLY going on? Whatever it is, it's for the financial benefit of Frank Patton and his invisible investors - NOT the general public, who stand to lose their businesses, farms and homes.

Please say "NO" to the GLBRR proposal.

Sincerely,

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