

Attn: Docket # FD 35952

May 20, 2017

Surface Transportation Board
 Docket No. FD 35952
 395 E Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20423-0001

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 May 22, 2017
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 Public Record

After much review of the information that has been provided to the public by GLB, I strongly believe the GLB railroad does not support the public's convenience and necessity. Before the GLB railroad is approved, I feel a detailed cost analysis needs to be done to calculate the total dollar value of loss that will occur to the hundreds of families affected by the GLB railroad versus the total dollar value of benefits it may provide. This report needs to be made available to the public. CREATE is already in process and railroad transportation times in the Chicago area have started to improve. If the CREATE program continues as planned, GLB railroad will not be needed.

Frank Patton said he is looking ahead to the next 100 years to improve the future. This is definitely something everyone should be looking at. However, the next generations do not need a railroad to survive—it is not a necessity. They will need safe food and clean water! It is estimated that the population will increase almost 50% within the next 50 years. People are eating healthier and are looking for fresh, nutritious, organic foods. Fertile farmland will be essential in providing the needed food for this increase in population. We cannot rely on importing food from other countries. Taking vast amounts of farmland out of production seems counter-productive.

Farmers are the hardest working people on this Earth. I don't know anyone in the corporate world (or any other profession) that are willing to work 7 days a week, 365 days a year, from sun up to sun down (or late into the night), in the pouring rain, in blizzards, in below-zero or above 100 degree temperatures, completing many physically demanding jobs, never knowing if they will be making a profit or taking a loss. Yet they do this to provide food for the rest of the world, not to climb the corporate ladder. They have worked tremendously hard to preserve the farmlands and make sure the land is productive. Now they are facing the possibility of having their land taken from them. No one wants to work hard all their life, towards a great retirement package/pension, only to have it all taken from them shortly before retirement. Farmers are no different. Now someone wants to take away what they have worked so hard to achieve.

If the GLB railroad is approved, some of the costs farmers/landowners will be facing:

- *Loss of income for crops that would have been grown in those fields for many generations to come.
- *Loss of income for land owners who rent the fields to farmers.
- *Many fields have tile drainage installed and paid for by the farmer. These tiles will be damaged. Farmers will not be reimbursed for the original cost. Who will pay for rerouting them?
- *Divided fields make it harder to access, causing more fuel to be spent as farmers find alternate routes to get to their land and modify how they need to work the fields.
- *Divided fields make it harder to irrigate these fields, increasing costs.
- *Repairing the railroad's fences around livestock if the railroad won't repair them.
- *If the railroad over-sprays weeds along the tracks and it kills crops, will the farmers be reimbursed?
- *If divided land parcels are too small to work, farmers will pay taxes on land that they can't work (no income) or sell (who would want to buy it?)

This world does not have much productive farmland left. Poor soil and lack of water makes a lot of the land in the United States insufficient for raising crops or animals. However, the Midwest has some of the best soil in the world. As cities continue to expand, little by little they take more and more farmland for development. Once this land is gone, there is no way to get it back. People need to fight to protect this endangered farmland. STB can do this by denying the GLB railroad.

Frank Patton has said he wants to pass on a legacy to his grandchildren.

Well, so do the farmers!

This should not be a reason to build a railroad.

Sincerely,

Paula Schoonover
 8739 E State Line Rd
 Clinton WI 53525
 262-296-1661

Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 35952
395 E Street, SW
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After much review of the information that has been provided to the public by GLB, I strongly believe the GLB railroad does not support the public's convenience and necessity. I have many concerns. The proposed train route is intentionally avoiding large, populated cities and passing through rural communities. Doing so will significantly stress the financial structure of many of these small villages, towns and townships. Most townships have limited funds available. These townships will need to find ways to cover the additional costs a railroad will require.

- *Why does the GLB need 15,000 acres for a rail yard?
- *What kinds of utilities are going in the 50 foot easement?
- *What happens if GLB goes bankrupt? The farmland that was taken by eminent domain is now wasted. The railroad tracks will sit idle, growing up with weeds. The farmers will have to deal with extra weeds invading their fields and the cost of using more herbicides to eradicate them, which in turn poses health risks.
- *Quiet zones mean the train will not honk its horn, however, to insure the safety at the crossings, many communities install wayside horns. The wayside horns still sound like train horns and will still disrupt people living around that area. It will not be a true quiet zone.
- *Hearing the noise of the train itself as it clacks, creaks and screeches down the tracks, interrupting the peaceful quietness of the countryside. Can disrupt night time sleep, causing adults to be less productive at work and children less attentive at school.
- *Foundations of homes damaged due to continuous vibrations and exhaust from the train.
- *Churches near the tracks. Possibility of damage to stained glass windows, foundations of historic buildings. Disrupting Sunday worship services, funeral services and wedding services.
- *Cemeteries near the tracks face damage to headstones from train exhausts, vibrations, diverted water causing erosion to burial plots. Disrupting solemn grave side services.
- *Schools near the tracks will have classes disrupted. Children need to have a quiet learning environment. The train noises and vibrations will not allow this to happen. Possibility of damage to the building from vibrations.
- *People on morning commutes to work may get delayed by trains crossing the road. This could lead to loss of wages due to arriving late to work or loss of a job if late too often.
- *Freight cars sitting on sidings for long periods of time. Blocks beautiful country views. Possibility of freight cars leaking while sitting idle.
- *Slow moving tractors will have to travel on busier roads due to some rural roads being closed. This poses an increased risk of accidents to hurried drivers passing the machinery.
- *Loss of hunting areas as trees are cut down for the tracks.
- *Snowmobile, ATV/Dirt bike, horseback riding and hiking trails and fishing spots will be disrupted due to increased noise, vibration and aesthetics.
- *Impact on golf course business due to increased noise, vibration and aesthetics.

If the GLB railroad is approved, some of the costs or loss of income townships will be facing:

- *Cost of purchasing/maintaining advance warning signs, and/or painting pavement warning markings on roadways at railroad crossings.
- *The cost, if chosen to implement them, of wayside horns at crossings in quiet zones.
- *Damage to nearby school buildings from train vibrations.
- *If roads are closed, buses will need to take longer routes to pickup/drop off children for school. Longer routes increase costs of bus maintenance and fuel.
- *Property values will decrease.
- *In order to cover additional costs, taxes will increase.
- *People will move away due to increased taxes, causing less tax money being collected. Taxes would rise again to make up the difference. More people will move away causing a vicious circle.
- *Local businesses will lose income due to people moving away or outsiders not willing to travel to smaller communities due to an increase in train crossings.

- *Most small towns' first responders are volunteers. With people moving away, it will be harder to recruit new volunteers.
- *Increased costs for additional equipment and training needed for first responders to respond to a train accident.
- *Jobs that are promised by Frank Patton will not be in most of the small communities.
- *If there is a derailment, will the townships have to cover the cost of cleanup? Railroads do not carry enough insurance to cover the loss of large catastrophes. They normally go bankrupt instead of paying for the damages to the victims.
- *What if the railroad goes bankrupt?

Frank Patton has stated that GLB will bring hundreds of jobs to the Chicago area. Most of the small communities that the train will cut through on the currently proposed route will not see these jobs. The train will not actually generate any additional income or profits for these small communities. Instead it will be taking away funds that are desperately needed.

STB needs to help protect these towns by denying the GLB railroad.

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After much review of the information that has been provided to the public by GLB, I strongly believe the GLB railroad does not support the public's convenience and necessity. I am extremely concerned about the environmental impact that the GLB train would have on rural areas.

WILDLIFE(flora & fauna): The rural areas and waterways are home to many wild animals, crustaceans and plants, including some that are on the U.S. Wildlife Endangered Species list.

Turkeys	Fish	Rattlesnake-master borer moth (candidate)
Bald Eagles	Frogs	Scaleshell (endangered)
Pheasants	Turtles	Sheepnose Mussel (endangered)
Swans	Clams	Eastern Massasauga (endangered)
Owls	Squirrels	Indiana Bat (endangered)
Hawks	Raccoons	Northern Long-Eared Bat (endangered)
Whooping Cranes	Fox	Descurrent False Aster (endangered)
Kestrels	Coyotes	Leafy Prairie Clover (endangered)
Kingfishers	Monarch Butterflies	Prairie Bush Clover (endangered)
Ducks	Honey Bees	Eastern Prairie White Fringed Orchid (endangered)
Deer	Dragonflies	

As more and more rural land is bought up for development, these wild animals are being driven out of their habitat and into the cities. Wildlife was never meant to live in close contact with humans. Public safety becomes a concern as these animals try to find food and shelter in populated areas. Many of these species will be killed off. Numerous trees will need to be cut down to make room for the tracks, destroying the homes of many animals.

WATER: A derailment, leaking train cars or creosote leaching from railroad ties could contaminate surrounding bodies of water, ground water and homeowners' personal drinking wells, putting animals and humans at a health risk.

The natural grade of the land will be altered which will disrupt the natural flow of surface water and could create artificial ponds and wetlands. With limited ways for water to disburse, areas holding water will become stagnant leading to issues with wildlife and an increase in the mosquito population. Bats and dragonflies consume a tremendous amount of mosquitoes. If bats and dragonflies are driven out of areas, it will also increase the mosquito population. With all the mosquito-borne diseases currently in the US, we can't afford to increase the amount of mosquitoes in rural areas. Stream banks, drainage ditches and creeks will be altered, possibly affecting flow of water during large rain events. With the natural flow of water being disrupted, possible erosion issues, including the washing out of the railroad bed, could occur. Large areas of fields would be rendered useless for agricultural production due to increased flooding.

AIR QUALITY/HEALTH: Fumes/exhaust from the train create health issues for animals and humans. There will be an increase in exhaust fumes of idling vehicles waiting at grade crossings. The most dangerous impact specific to railroad incidents is the release of hydrocarbons and other toxic materials during an explosion that can contaminate the air. As a person with asthma, I have chosen to live in the country to have clean, fresh air to breathe to avoid lung aggravations. A single mature tree can absorb carbon dioxide at a rate of 48 lbs./year and release enough oxygen back into the atmosphere to support two people. One acre of trees annually consumes the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent to that produced by driving an average car for 26,000 miles. That same acre of trees also produces enough oxygen for 28 people to breathe for a year. Clearing trees for the path of a train could contribute to health issues and climate change.

The lives of people, flora and fauna should not be jeopardized for a private railroad to make a profit.

STB can help protect the health of these communities by declining the GLB proposal.

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After much review of the information that has been provided to the public by GLB, I strongly believe the GLB railroad does not support the public's convenience and necessity. I am extremely worried about the safety of my community and the other communities along the proposed GLB railroad route.

QUIET ZONES: Frank Patton has said the entire route will be a quiet zone and trains will not sound the horn at crossings. This increases the chance of a train vs auto accident. In the rural communities, many farmers are crossing tracks with large/long pieces of machinery and at slow speeds. Will they have enough time to cross the tracks before the approaching train arrives? Rural communities school districts are many miles wide. This subjects school buses full of children to travel many country roads and cross many train tracks on their way to and from school. How safe will our children be at these crossings?

CHILDREN: How close the train is to a home. Small children will be tempted to play on the tracks.

FIRST RESPONDERS: In rural areas it takes First Responders a lot longer to report to the scene of an incident. Additional train crossings will delay the First Responders even more if they have to wait for a train to pass or go an alternate route. There is also an increased chance of a train vs First Responder vehicle accident. It could be a life or death situation for many people.

TRAIN DERAILMENTS: The amount of train derailments in the recent years has been tremendous. In 2013 alone, the total gallons of oil spilled by rail were more than the combined totals from 1975-2012! I'm terrified about what types of products will be hauled in the freight cars, such as Bakken oil (which is the most flammable), nuclear waste or hazardous chemicals. From these derailments/spillages/explosions we are seeing ground water contamination, bodies of water filled with chemicals endangering the aquatic animals and surrounding land animals, families losing their homes and their lives. Most rural communities are not equipped to deal with a derailment, yet they will be the first on the scene. How fast will GLB arrive? I'm sure not within minutes of the accident. How fast will they be able to evacuate people if there is an explosion? Will there even be time? What about livestock? It won't be possible to evacuate all of them? It is understandable why they don't want to run GLB through populated areas, more people in a smaller area is harder to evacuate and more lives that could be lost, but people in the country are still people and every life matters, no matter where that person chooses to live. Even one life lost is one too many!

FIELD WORK/ANIMALS: The GLB railroad would cut many fields into smaller parcels. Farmers will have to cross the tracks in the field many times as they work the land. There will not be many safety precautions in the middle of a field. It is assumed that the farmer can "look both ways before crossing" on his own. Farmers may not be able to see a train that is coming over the hill or around the bend. Tractors are noisy and it is not easy to hear outside noises from inside the cab of a tractor. Even if a train sounds the horn, would the farmer be able to hear it? Livestock and wild animals may wander onto tracks due to poor or broken fencing. Who pays for the cost of loss of livestock if the railroad's fence is down?

FIRES: Trains throw sparks from the rails. In towns, with the asphalt surrounding the tracks, this causes no problems. In the country, a few sparks from a train will cause a field to quickly be consumed in flames. These fires spread very rapidly from field to field and farm to farm, especially in the fall during harvest time, when the fields are full of dried crops. If tank cars are parked on a siding in a burning field, these cars could erupt. As mentioned above, it already takes First Responders extra time to reach a fire in the country and now with the added blocked roads due to train crossings, it will take even longer. Many crops, animals, barns and houses could be destroyed because of these fires. Who will be responsible for the cost?

For the safety of our communities, I ask that the STB not approve the GLB railroad.

Sincerely,

Paula Schoonover
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