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Surface Transportation Board

395 E. Street S.W.

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May 23, 2017

RE: Public Comment on Proposed Great Lakes Basin Railway Project

DOCKET # FD-35952

Dear Board Members and Staff:

I have been involved in the railroad industry for the last 20 years and have taken a number of special assignments by various short line railroad holding companies as well as museums and tourist railroads. I spent several of those years traveling the class 1's and short line railroads expediting high value railcar loads. This travel gave me an opportunity to learn about the reality of American Railroads much like a secret shopper would do. I have an "Insider's View" and not a "Foamer's View" of the "REALITY" of railroading. I have hundreds of friends still active in railroading and communicate frequently with them to discuss issues that face railroads in the modern age. I want to stress that I have learned the difference between REAL RAILROADERS and FOAMERS. FOAMERS live on their dreams without facing the reality of things like economics or safety.

I spent a lot of time over the years observing the San Diego & Arizona Railroad Board Meetings and attempts to re-open the Desert Line and salvage the Coronado Belt Line for rapid transit and tourism in the San Diego region. The reason I bring up the Desert Line of the SDAE also known as the Carrizo Gorge Railway is because of the many similarities between the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railway Project. Both projects were/are being promoted by RAILFANS or FOAMERS with little or no real railroad experience. Both groups are: "WANNA-BE's" who probably couldn't couple two cars together if asked to do so. Dr. John Hoegemier is a PHD in Economics and was a consultant to the SDAE Railway Board for many years and now works for BNSF. He schooled me on the economics of building and operating rail lines from the dollars and cents point of view. Not the "GEE I WISH" point of view held by most

Hobbyists and Foamers. I say this because the main spokesperson for the Great Lakes Basin Railroad Project has demonstrated that he is not a real railroader. When I saw his publicity photo standing (trespassing) on Metra Railroad right-of-way without proper PPE (Personal Protection Gear such as hard hats, boots, safety vest, etc.) I realized that this is not a person who should even be on railroad property and doesn't have the first clue about safety.

I first became aware of the proposed Great Lakes project at Thanksgiving when a distant relative told us that his house was in the path of a proposed railroad and if it was approved they would probably eminent domain his residence. So I looked up the project and started doing a little more study. As a former student of design at Southern Illinois University, I recalled the first rule of good design is to: **"MAXIMIZE USE OF THE EXISTING RESOURCES"**. The entire premise of the Great Lakes Basin Project is to "Circumvent the Chicago Metropolitan Area to relieve rail congestion". The Great Lakes plan is to BLAZE A TRAIL through almost virgin undeveloped territory; through private properties with little or no economic benefits for the people whose property and livelihoods would be impacted to say nothing of the impacts to the environment and wildlife that would be massacred by such a large project. Had this project been proposed 60-70 years ago it would have had more viability and be more feasible to accomplish. To do this project now has too many impacts to be taken seriously. Just the crop acres lost is astronomical !

In my research I quickly realized that Frank and his group have not given serious consideration in any way to make use of existing resources to accomplish this project. The end game of this project can easily be accomplished using existing railroad right-of-ways. No wonder the other Class 1's don't want to get involved? They don't need it to accomplish the same ends. There is existing rail that could easily bypass Chicago congestion now if it was needed.

The somewhat recent acquisition of the former EJ&E by CN and the completion of the double wye interchange and flyover at Matteson, just south of the Homewood / Hazelcrest yards has allowed CN to move a large amount of rail traffic from the Beloit/Rockford area around the Metropolitan Chicago area into northern Indiana. Because of my proximity to the interchange, I can assure you that several other class 1's are also making use of the EJ&E bypass including CSX, Norfolk Southern, BNSF and Union Pacific and CP. If there was a demand for additional rail to circumvent the Chicago Metro area, the Class 1's and Terminal Railroads have the ability to add additional tracks within existing -rights- of- way.

Another major item which has been overlooked or omitted from the Great Lakes proposal are former rail lines where the rights-of-way have been preserved or rail banked/bike-trailed or left dormant. It doesn't take too much time on Google Earth to realize that many of these former rail routes still have grading and in some cases bridges and overpasses where they cross major highways. Using an existing or dormant right-of-way; although not without impacts, would have serious cost savings for infrastructure and fewer impacts to land owners ; since they were already once railroads. Using some of these routes connects multiple points on the same proposed route with more direct routes that also have lower mileage. It appears that these were not considered in the current plan.

Much of the interstate highway system was still under construction when I was in high school biology class. I remember our teacher talking about the impacts to wildlife by severing migratory routes of indigenous animals. As if our current highways and rail lines in the metro area don't already slaughter enough wildlife and remove trees which oxygenate the air we breathe ? The proponents of this project are all about the money and could care less about the impacts to mother nature or the family farms and business' that would be negatively impacted.

I am reminded of something a wealthy lady named Margaret Hunsberger said to some of the San Diego Railroad Museum Foamers that wanted to start Carrizo Gorge Railway back in 1999 using the museum's locomotives and equipment. She said; ***"When the BIG MONEY come in, you don't think you little PEONS will have anything to say about the railroad then do you?"***

So let's talk about the BIG MONEY in the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railway project. The spokesperson for the project is not willing to publicly reveal the investors at this time. There might be a couple of reasons for that. The first reason might be that there are few or no significant investors at this time. It is highly likely that the spokesperson has been talking to lots of potential investors who don't want to take the risk or have their names mentioned in case the project fails. The spokesperson may be a *front person* taking all the risk for others behind the scenes. Like many other controversial projects; If it is approved, the investors will flock to the project eager to invest their money. The original partners will quickly sell their stock and walk away from the deal much richer than they were! What about all the investors who have been sold on a FOAMER's RALROAD DREAM that is not economically or politically viable? The promoters will be long gone with their money long before the new investors find out it's a losing project.

My personal opinion is that this project is a scam to separate some wealthy fools from their money with total disregard for the wildlife and families who's lifestyles and survival are threatened by this project. The promoters and original investors will walk away with their retirement and when the project moves forward it will likely fail. Why would another railroad company utilize a competing railroad when they can already do it themselves with existing resources ? In the case of the Carrizo George, the thought of reopening the desert line and the potential freight from NAFTA out of Baja was enough to separate many wealthy people from their fortunes. The dream and the greed seems to overpower the reality of the situation. As P.T. Barnum once said; ***"Another Sucker is Born Every Minute"***!

Great Lakes Basin Railroad seems to not have an actual office. It's spokesperson holds court/meetings at a prestigious Chicago Men's Club where he spends his days talking up the project to potential wealthy investors. If this project is approved, some may jump on the bandwagon to help finance the project but, that's what this is all about really. It's not about railroading or relieving imaginary freight congestion in the metropolitan area. It's about making a lot of money whether the project works or not. I am not willing to support this project under those terms and my sympathies go to those family farmers, small business' , homeowners and wildlife that will suffer as a result of ***Frank's Folly***.

If Frank wants to really impact freight congestion in Chicago, I suggest he get together with Elon Musk and his hyper-loop tunnel project. If he could accomplish the same route underground with a hyper-

loop big enough to transport intermodal containers, he would have a viable competitive project. The project as proposed is not feasible in my opinion and should not be approved as it is currently proposed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwin J. Kravitz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Edwin J. Kravitz

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