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Victoria Rutson, Director
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Kenneth Blodgett, Environmental
Protection Specialist
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Ms. Ruston and Mr. Blodgett:

As the state representative for the 43rd Assembly District in southern Wisconsin, I am writing to register my opposition to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line. I request that the Board take into consideration my position on behalf of my constituents when members consider this proposal.

The proposed rail line would be detrimental to my constituents who will be directly affected by its construction. The citizens of the 43rd Assembly District will not see the any of the purported benefits of the new rail line. There will be no increased efficiency in transportation of local goods and services by the construction of the line. The only benefits of this proposal will go to the Great Lakes Basin Transportation Corporation – not the people of southern Wisconsin.

I ask that the Surface Transportation Board wholly reject the proposal with a “no build” option. I also ask that this decision be made quickly so that my constituents may move on with their lives.

Simply put, the proposed line is unnecessary. Great Lakes Basin Transportation (GLBT) itself has never built nor transported anything, as it is neither a rail company, nor old enough to have any experience with such matters. Not a single Class I railroad has stated that they would use the proposed line. Further, the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency program was created with the express goal of improving the efficiency of the Chicago rail system.

The costs of construction, maintenance, and quiet zones would fall on the governing bodies of the affected areas more than the Great Lakes Basin Transportation Corporation. There is no need for the proposed line, and it creates undue harm to the land and residents of the 43rd district and of southern Wisconsin.

Family farms would be divided by the rail line, rendering them of little farming value. For every mile of rail and ROW, we would lose 24 acres of farmland. Wisconsin has some of the best agricultural soil in the country, and its fertile land has produced some of the most efficient farms.

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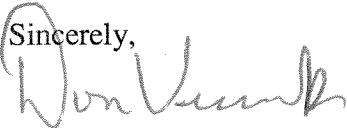
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In Wisconsin, the small family farm is a cornerstone of the Wisconsin economy. The rail line would cause untold numbers of those farms to shut down.

The wealth of most Americans is tied up in their homes, and a drop in the market value of that house hurts the owner's current and future prosperity. The rail line would force eminent domain on numerous families, taking chunks of their land, and decreasing the market value of the homes. Any compensation would be one-time and would not cover the lost value of future years.

The rail line would be built directly along the edge of property of one of my constituents. This would severely damage the family's quality of life and their ability to live peacefully and safely in the homestead they worked so hard to build for themselves. The train activity would be a hazard to the health of the animals they raise. The family fears they would be forced to sell – at a deeply reduced price – the home of their dreams.

I respectfully urge the Board to reject this proposal.

Sincerely,


DON VRUWINK
State Representative
43rd Assembly District