

Surface Transportation Board

Outgoing Correspondence Record



#EO-2792

Correspondence Information		Status: Complete	
* Required Fields		Recorded by Adam Assenza on 05/13/2016	
*Docket #:	FD 35952 0	*Name of Sender:	Victoria Rutson
*Letter Recipient:	Gerald Solomon and Camille Mittelholtz		
Group:	U.S. Department of Transportation	Date of Letter:	04/27/2016
Affiliation:	Federal Agency	In Public Docket?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Letter Type:	Letter		

Comments

From: Vicki Rutson/STB
To: gerald.solomon@dot.gov, Camille.Mittelholtz@dot.gov
Date: 04/27/2016 03:19 PM
Subject: Email sent by concerned farmer/landowner in STB proceeding "Great Lakes Basin Transportation" proposal

Dear Mr. Solomon and Ms. Mittelholtz:

I am writing to you in response to an email sent by one of our stakeholders to Secretary Foxx. I have attached the email below for your information and provide some info below, which I hope helps in case Secretary Foxx has any questions.

The Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis just completed scoping meetings for an Environmental Impact Statement on a large rail line construction proposal--278 miles through Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. This proposal has been developed by a group called Great Lakes Basin Transportation. The purpose of the new rail line is to provide an alternative route that would avoid the congestion of traveling through Chicago. Our environmental review is in its infancy but it is very clear that residents in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana are strongly opposed to this proposed rail line.

At this point, none of the Class Is have indicated interest in using this rail line. Union Pacific has stated that it has no interest in using it. Hundreds of farmers and landowners are voicing concerns, including sending emails similar to the one I have attached below sent to Secretary Foxx. Great Lakes Basin Transportation says that it plans to use private funds to build the rail line, which it estimates would cost \$8B.

We have reached out to the three state DOTs, all of which have been helpful and gracious. If there is any information that would be helpful to you or if you would like to chat with me about this proposal or our environmental review, I would be happy to oblige.

Regards,

Vicki Rutson
(202) 245-0295

Victoria Rutson
Director, Office of Environmental Analysis

Surface Transportation Board
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----- Forwarded by Vicki Rutson/STB on 04/27/2016 03:02 PM -----

From: Nystroms Nursery <scott@nystromsnursery.com>
To: <anthony.foxx@dot.gov>
Cc: <rutsonv@stb.dot.gov>, <phillis.johnson-ball@stb.dot.gov>, <david.navecky@stb.dot.gov>, <adam.assenza@stb.dot.gov>, <rpw@zimwalsh.com>
Date: 04/26/2016 02:57 PM
Subject: Vital information regarding GLBR enviromental impact.

To all that this concerns,

My name is Scott Nystrom. My wife and I own the farm on the South/East corner of Winnebago County in Illinois. When a local farmer notified us of a railroad potentially impacting our farm on Wednesday 4/13/16, we looked up the route and were shocked that someone would think they could violate us in such a way. After hours of research and contacting numerous bodies of government, we uncovered vital information. Frank Patton and Jim Wilson of GLBR filed an updated narrative route with the Office of Environmental Analysis/ Surface Transportation Board on 3/7/16. In DETAIL, the letter explains routes the train will follow, and why alternate routes were not preferred. Our farm is located at MP 186-188 on Frank and Jim's detailed description. Frank and Jim list MP 180-190 as one large section. Here is the exact information they put for why alternative routes were not chosen for this section. "Several impediments preclude this alternative, including adjacent wetlands and hunting areas, and a gradient issue on the Illinois-Wisconsin border."

INSTEAD, they chose a route for MP 186-188, that land locks our entire farm. The route also closes off our road. As you can see from the picture attached, which came directly off of the GLBR website, this route indeed goes directly through wetlands and prime hunting areas. To be more descript, the planned route goes first, through hundreds of thousands of dollars of established nursery tree stock. Then, it crosses land in a CRP program to prevent erosion. Then, it goes through acres of wooded areas which are also prime hunting grounds. Then, it not only crosses wetlands, but it crosses the South branch of the Kishwaukee River. This area has a volatile 990 foot flood plain that continues to grow due to development in neighboring counties.

Frank and Jim's detailed environmental interface for this route states exactly this, " The route goes through greenfield farmland and passes some residences and farmsteads. NO WETLANDS, WOODED AREAS, OR WATERWAYS would be affected by this segment. Again, they state for the image attached below, from their website, that in this segment no wetlands, wooded areas, or waterways would be affected.

We feel that you, the Surface Transportation Board, have an obligation to immediately stop this project! It is not possible to conduct an accurate environment study, when the GLBR gives false information regarding the environmental impact of the routes. We feel with this vital information, if you choose to license the GLBR to run a multi-track, Class 1 railroad, hauling toxic material/oil/fertilizer etc., you the Surface Transportation Board, will be equally as liable for the catastrophic environmental impact this will have, and the hundreds of thousands of lives this will negatively impact. The GLBR lacks leadership, and needs to be held accountable for the false information given to you, the Surface Transportation Board. They lied to us, they lied to you, and they have no credibility. There is no excuse, in a project of this caliber, that any information can be "overlooked". If mistakes like this are happening in phase 1 of this project, as vital as this is, there can be NO phase 2! We trust you will look at all of the information and make the right decision- NO!

Scott Nystrom
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Image Attachment(s)

