

May 16, 2016

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

Mr. Dave Navecky,

I am concerned about the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line through Rock County. I grew up with railroad tracks running along the property line of our 3 acres. Trains are noisy, but people get used to the noise and learn to ignore it over time. However, there are many socio/economic effects that concern me.

The proposed railroad will create few, if any additional jobs. While workers will be needed during construction, very few steady, long-term jobs will be required to operate the railroad afterward. The railroad is designed to carry goods across country. This will have the effect of eliminating the jobs of truck operators currently carrying those goods. This would result in a net job loss.

The proposed railroad will be cutting across the Pelishek-Tiffany Nature Trail. This trail is used for snowmobiling, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and bird watching throughout the year. The railroad would disrupt the peace enjoyed by all the trail users, make use of the segmented trail difficult, and destroy bird watching opportunities.

Farmers will lose income from having less acreage under production, fragmented land, destroyed drain tile, and polluted land adjacent to the tracks. (Additional use of herbicides to kill weeds along the tracks and in the utility corridor will add pollution to land and water.) The lost income and reduced property values of other rural landowners will affect the local economy. Less income results in less income, property, and sales tax paid to governmental bodies. In order maintain government services, everyone's taxes will have to be raised. Railroads do not pay taxes in Wisconsin. The result will be a poorer local economy. The railroad will have no economic benefit to Rock County. It will only benefit already rich and possibly foreign investors.

The GLBR has no track record of building or operating a railroad. What happens if it is not profitable? Rock County currently has 2 roads closed due to lack of maintenance of existing railroad bridges. If the GLBR is permitted to construct this railroad, the permit should require a long term maintenance fund be established. The GLBR should be required to put a set dollar amount into the fund before operations begin and be required to contribute a set percentage of gross receipts (not net income) into the fund each year. They must not be able to access this fund for any purpose other than future maintenance (after railroad dissolution or bankruptcy). A railroad going out of business is not like other businesses. It includes roads, bridges, and tunnels required by other modes of transportation. Let's plan for the next 100 years ahead, not be caught short later.

GLBR's web site states that their purpose "is to construct and operate a safe, reliable, and entirely new freight rail bypass around Chicago..." Routing the tracks through eastern Rock County does not resolve the rail traffic problem in Chicago. There are miles of under-utilized track already traversing Rock County. There is no reason GLBR cannot forge an alliance with another railroad carrier to upgrade one of these existing lines to accommodate additional rail traffic. Or they could join existing tracks running north to Milwaukee.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Kautz



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