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Congress of the United States
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March 31, 2017

The Honorable Ann D. Begeman, Chairman
U.S. Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Ms. Victoria Ruston, Environment Analysis
U.S. Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Dear Chairman Begeman and Ms. Ruston:

I write to express my concerns with a proposed new freight railroad by Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. (GLBT) Docket No. FD 35952. The proposed line would run through three states and 11 counties – crossing countless acres of private farm land.

I have the honor of representing Illinois' Second Congressional District, which is home to 1,200 farms and one of few Congressional districts served by all Class 1 railroads. Both multi-modal transportation and farming are essential pillars of the district's and state's economies. Furthermore, they are mutually dependent sectors. Investments in rail cannot come at the expense of viable, productive, farm land. Otherwise, there will be fewer products to fill the freight cars.

While the stated goal of reducing rail congestion in Chicago is laudable, bottleneck reduction should not come at the expense of reduction in crop production. A mutually beneficial balance must be reached. I fear the current GLBT rail line proposal fails to reach the appropriate balance. As the Board considers the proposal, I strongly encourage you to not only consider the necessity of the line, but also fully weigh the costs and benefits of the proposed route on all community members, especially our hard-working farmers.

Should the current proposal be approved unchanged, I will be unable to support it. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress