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April 21, 2016

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
ATTN: Docket No. FD 35952
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-001

Dear Mr. Navecky,

I am writing in regards to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line that is currently proposed to pass through parts of Indiana and Illinois. As a resident of Salina Township in Kankakee County, the proposed rail line is planned to pass within a few hundred yards of my home and the home of my mother in law. Although I am angered by the close proximity of the proposed rail line route to my home, the purpose of letter is to express concern over local environmental issues, the impact on land use owned by my family, and the impact on local transportation.

Environmental Issues

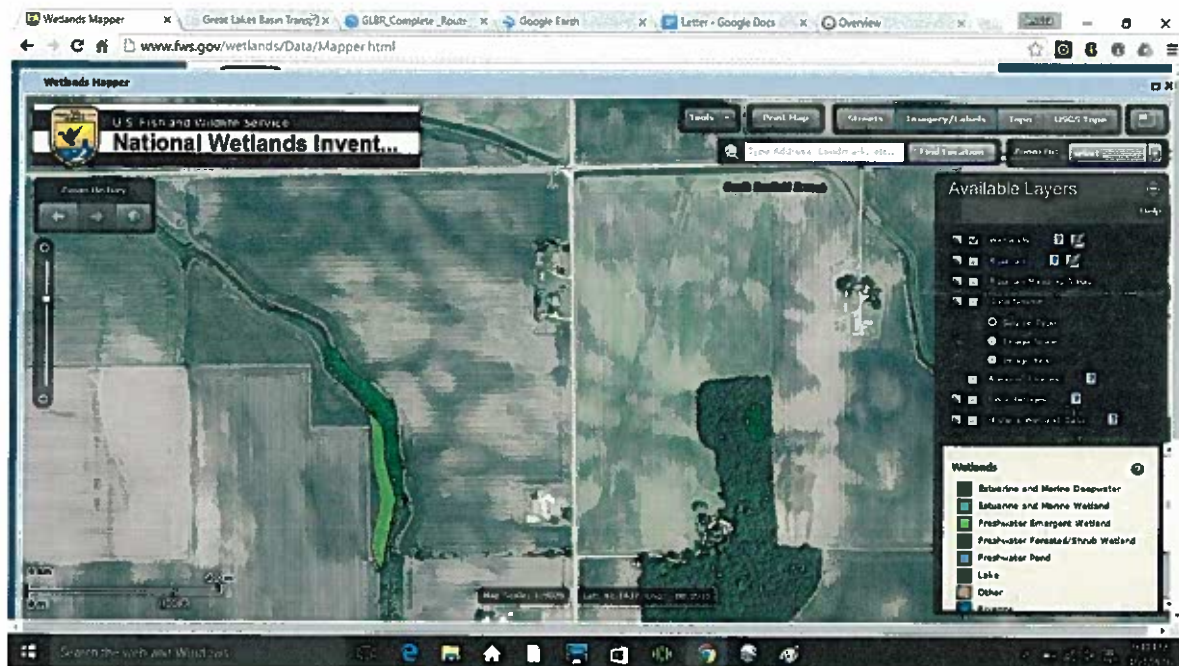
Figure 1 is a screenshot from Google Earth with the proposed rail line in red. The intersection on the upper (north) side of the screenshot is the intersection of 11000 W RD and 2000 N RD in Kankakee County. The blue shaded area is property owned by my family and the the area boxed in yellow are the three residences owned. As you can see, the rail transverses our family property passing right next to my home.

Figure 1 - Property Map with Proposed Railway



Figure 2 is from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory Wetland Mapper. As you can see, the proposed rail line will pass very near a federally designated Freshwater Emergent Wetland and a Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland. Although the proposed path does not pass directly through the wetland, passing in such close proximity would still damage the area, both during construction and normal operation of the rail line. My father in law, his children, his grandchildren, and other family members have made efforts to preserve this area in an effort to draw wildlife, however this work would be negated by the proposed construction and use of the railway.

Figure 2 - US Fish and Wildlife National Wetland Inventory



We are unsure if any protected or endangered species reside in the wetland area, however this lack of knowledge should not predicate the existence of such species within the federally identified area.

Impact on Land Use

The impact of the rail line transversing my family's property would be significant. The first impact would be loss of tillable acreage. In Figure 3, there is a dark blue triangle located at the top. Although this land would not technically be considered part of the proposed railway, it would be considered unusable as access would be difficult and tilling such a small area would be impossible. The loss of this currently used portion of the farm would probably not be considered during the land purchase by the railway and would be an usable property loss resulting in income loss for my family.

Figure 3 - Location of Tillable Land Loss Not Part of Railroad Purchase



Secondly, access to the land located on the west side of the creek is through the property to the north (circled in red - Figure 3). Since the rail line would transverse through this property, access to the land on the south, would have to be provided through the property from the south. This access lane would have to be approximately three quarters of a mile long and utilize already tilled property from another land owner, assuming the property owner to the south allowed such access. If the landowner to the south did not allow access, this land could no longer be tilled and would result in loss of farm income. If the landowner did approve of access, there would be significant cost incurred due to increased travel distance and time required to access the area. Of course, I would expect that the rail company would not purchase or compensate the family for this land resulting in another significant hardship.

The third and final concern would be water drainage. Due to the topography of the property, water drainage and the field tile generally follows the pattern of the arrows in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Normal Water Drainage Pattern



As you can see in Figure 4, the rail line would pass right through this water drainage area. It can be assumed that during construction of the rail line the field tile, located to the north of the houses leading to the creek to the north, would become damaged. This would not allow for proper water drainage on the property. Therefore, water drainage would most likely be directed back towards the two residences and would pool around the residences as there would be no ditch drainage to the creek to the north (Figure 5).

Figure 5 - Water Drainage Pattern Change



As water drainage would be forced toward the residences on the property, the threat of basement flooding would increase significantly. This would likely result in significant financial loss on more than one occasion. Again, another hardship that would not be compensated by the railroad company, but caused by the rail line.

Impact on Transportation

Passage of the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line through the Kankakee County West area would impact local transportation. As most railroad crossing would pass through township roads, road upkeep may come at a higher cost than the townships could afford resulting in multiple road closures. One particular concern would be the increase in railroad crossings within the Herscher School District. The Herscher School District is one of the largest districts in Illinois, from a square mileage perspective. Long student transportation times are common and bus routes transverse 3 area counties. The additional railroad crossings in the district would increase student transportation time or would require the purchase of additional busses by the an already financially burdened school district. The Herscher School District is also divided into grade centers requiring student transport, not to just the local school, but the school appropriate for the age of the student. Currently, the high school and intermediate schools are located in Herscher. The elementary school is located in Bonfield and the middle school is located in Limestone. As illustrated in Figure 6, 11000W RD to 2000N RD serves as the major route between Herscher and Bonfield. Numerous busses, students, and parents take this road back and forth in between the two schools. The proposed rail line would pass right through the intersection of those two roads leading to significant safety concerns as 2 crossing would be in close proximity to each other. As these are secondary roads, it is highly unlikely that crossing guards would be placed at these crossing, therefore increasing the likeliness of accidents.

Figure 6 - Main Transportation Route in Between Herscher and Bonfield



In conclusion, I am vehemently opposed to the current route of the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line as it would incur significant land use hardships resulting in a significant financial farm income and property value loss to my family. The proposed route passing so close to a federal wetland is also concerning from an environmental perspective as it may further damage any past wetland conservation efforts. Finally, I fear for the safety of the number of

children on school buses and private vehicles that will pass through the double railroad crossing proposed at 11000 W and 2000 N Rd's in Kankakee County. We are all too familiar with student deaths on country roads in this district and I fear the number of additional poorly maintained railroad crossing would only exacerbate the issue.

Sincerely,

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