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Chairman Daniel R. Elliott III
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, SW
Washington DC 20423

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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Chairman Elliott:

I am a student at College of DuPage and I am currently taking an Environmental Biology class. For our final project, we had to choose a current controversial environmental topic in our area that we can research and present to our class. My group and I chose the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line project.

After researching both sides of this issue, I have some concerns about how this project will benefit our environment and economy. Constructing a 278-mile railroad from La Porte, Indiana, through Illinois, to near Milton, Wisconsin may seem like a good idea and would provide an alternative route for freight trains instead of going through the congested city area, there are many more negative impacts this project would have on our environment that outweigh the "good".

This 278-mile railroad will cut through rural areas disturbing and running close to homes and businesses. It could damage farmland and split up heritage farmlands. Over time, the resources that are provided now on our farmlands will decrease due to the pollution and damage the construction will do to our lands. The land in that area could be seized through eminent domain. It could potentially decrease property values and hinder future development near the tracks. Tax money paid by residents would also be used to maintain the railroad instead of upkeep for their town. Not only will it run through rural areas but it will also run through undeveloped spaces where nature thrives and healthy ecosystems exist. Endangered species could be harmed and their habitats could be damaged resulting in organisms not living to their full potential. The railroad will also cross over major waterways including the Troy Bedrock Aquifer, the Kankakee River, the Kishwaukee River, the Fox River, and other Illinois River

water systems should come potentially damage and pollute the water. Even without oil spills, there will still be damage caused by the construction. Counties who get their drinking water from these water sources will flounder due to the damage that this project will create.

Overall, I have a lot of questions that still need to be answered. How will our environment prosper from this project? How will this benefit all of the counties that this railway will go through? I believe that this project would not only damage our environment, but it would also harm our economy in the long run. I understand that this project is privately funded, but will that really matter in ten to fifteen years when our crops are damaged by air and water pollution? There are alternative ways to better this project that would be more helpful and less destructive to our environment. For example, if we changed the route instead of going through farmlands. Following existing partial railway routes, expressways, or power lines could save us money and be less detrimental to our environment. I will wait for the Environmental Impact Statement to come out to have a better grasp on this topic.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alexa Gianatasio
Student at College of DuPage

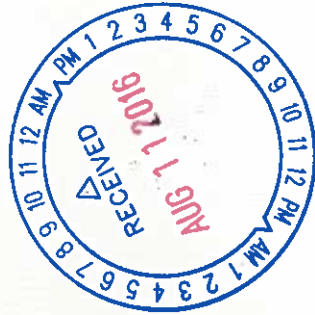
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