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June 2, 2016

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

In re: Great Basin Railroad

Mr. Navecky:

I am an attorney practicing in Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois for over 40 years and my family has owned farmland in Boone County for nearly 70 years.

I am opposed to the proposed Great Basin Railroad passing through Boone County as it is presently configured.

My reasons are as follows:

1. The Boone County Comprehensive Plan for Zoning has had at its focal point for many years now, the preservation of farmland. All of our zoning ordinances are geared towards protection of the excellent soils that we have here in Boone County. I note in particular that the train website indicates that the proposed location of the train tracks avoids poor soils; whereas our plan, is to focus commercial development and subdivision areas of the county in areas that do not have prime agricultural soils. The proposed railroad flaunts all the efforts our citizens have put into drafting this policy. This Plan is available at the Boone County government offices.
2. The Kishwaukee River and its tributaries are rated annually as some of the best quality rivers in the State of Illinois. Building tracks over these waterways will jeopardize this status.
3. The railroad website also indicates that it is a goal of the project developers to avoid populated areas when determining the location of the tracks. Would not it make more sense to actually lay tracks along existing highways closer to the Rockford Airport and use areas that are already not available for agricultural use? Use existing right of ways. Put the tracks where the goods need to be

picked up and delivered which are in the populated areas.

4. I see no economic benefit for Boone County residents. There are no plans for any stops that would be beneficial to the community that I am aware of. Our agricultural economy will suffer at the expense of a purported economic benefit to others. Why is one more important than the other?
5. It appears that the tracks go through middles of existing fields rather than along fence lines, which will make it difficult for the farmers to continue farming as they have in the past with their large equipment.
6. The only people being compensated for the tracks are the landowners on which the tracks are being laid. There is no compensation to the neighboring property owners for noise, possible pollution, and the inability to run their farming operations as they have in the past. Large farm machinery will now need to travel down narrow country roads which already present a danger today. It will only worsen with the prospect of 100 trains a day going on these tracks at rapid speeds.
7. Most of the children in our county are transported to school on school buses. There are no hospitals in Boone County. Transportation is provided for most residents by a local rescue squad to facilities in Rockford. Several high speed trains will impact these services as well.
8. Our county has a strong agri-tourism business community as well. Thousands of Cook County and other urban residents come to our community to enjoy orchards, farm stays, farm markets, farming co-ops, and the largest fair in the State of Illinois. High speed trains through the heart of our county will ruin this experience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

TOBIN & RAMON

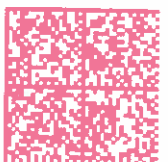


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