

In The Matter Of:
*Public Scoping Meeting For The EIS On The
Great Lakes Basin Rail Line*

*Online
April 27, 2016*

*Midwest Reporting, Inc.
1448 Lincoln Way East
South Bend, Indiana 46613*

GREAT LAKES BASIN RAIL LINE EIS
ONLINE PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 27, 2016

Time: 1:04 p.m. Central Time

APPEARANCES:

HEARING FACILITATOR:

MS. JENNIFER PIGGOTT

Principal

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PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. TIFFANY MENDOZA

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MR. DAVE NAVECKY

MS. PHILLIS JOHNSON-BALL

Surface Transportation Board

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1 MS. PIGGOTT: We have a few panel members with us
2 today. We have Dave Navecky from the Office of
3 Environmental Analysis with the Surface Transportation
4 Board; Phillis Johnson-Ball, also with the Office of
5 Environmental Analysis with the Surface Transportation
6 Board; Alan Summerville, who is the project manager with
7 ICF International, and then as I said, my name is
8 Jennifer Piggott, your meeting facilitator today.

9 Here is our agenda for today. We're going to do
10 some additional introductions, and then I will turn it
11 over to the Surface Transportation Board to provide an
12 overview of the Environmental Impact Statement process,
13 and overview of the purpose and need and proposed action
14 for the project. Then the Surface Transportation Board
15 will review both their website and our project website,
16 and then we'll move into the oral scoping comments, and
17 we're set to adjourn today's meeting at 3:30 p.m. Central
18 Time.

19 So at this point, I would like to introduce Mr. Dave
20 Navecky from the Office of Environmental Analysis with
21 the Surface Transportation Board.

22 Dave, I have un-muted your line. Can you hear me,
23 Dave?

24 MR. NAVECKY: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

25 MS. PIGGOTT: I can. Thank you.

1 MR. NAVECKY: Jennifer, I'm seeing the initial
2 slide. Can we advance to slide number 4?

3 MS. PIGGOTT: Sure. Just one moment. And I
4 apologize. It was advancing on my screen, but it looks
5 like there was a delay. You should be seeing them
6 advance at this point.

7 MR. NAVECKY: There we go. Thank you. Good
8 afternoon, everyone. This is Dave Navecky with the
9 Office of Environmental Analysis with the Surface
10 Transportation Board, the agency's lead in the
11 preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement, and I
12 would like to, initially, give you an overview of the
13 Surface Transportation Board and our process for
14 preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

15 The Surface Transportation Board, or Board, is a
16 small independent federal agency located in Washington,
17 D.C. We have economic jurisdiction over the economic
18 regulation of the freight railroad industry. That
19 jurisdiction extends to the construction and operation of
20 new rail line facilities. A license or approval is
21 required from our agency before such projects can
22 proceed.

23 When we consider a construction case, the Board
24 considers both the transportation merits of the proposed
25 rail line and the potential environmental impacts. The

1 transportation merits are considered by other folks
2 within our agency. The focus of today's webinar is a --
3 is the environmental review process and to get your
4 comments on the potential impacts of the proposed rail
5 line.

6 After those two reviews are completed, one for
7 transportation merits and one for environmental impacts,
8 the Board, which consists of three members -- and I'll
9 come back to this a little later -- will issue a final
10 decision that either approves, denies, or approves with
11 conditions the proposed rail line. Next slide, please.

12 So I mentioned where we've begun our environmental
13 review process, and the first step is scoping. And the
14 purpose of scoping is to reach out to all the interested
15 federal, state, and local agencies, members of the
16 public, and other interested parties who have an interest
17 in the project and solicit scoping comments from them.
18 And from scoping comments, what we want, what we're
19 looking for are -- is input on what we should be
20 reviewing, what type of issues should we be studying as
21 we go through our environmental review. The input from
22 the local citizens is very important to us, since you're
23 most aware of the issues, you live there, you farm there,
24 and so it's important for us to hear from you folks and
25 to identify the issues you think we should be studying in

1 this Environmental Impact Statement.

2 We're also interested in hearing any suggestion
3 folks may have on alternatives to the proposed rail line.
4 We'll be looking at the alignment that's been proposed by
5 the Great Lakes Transportation, Incorporated, Group.
6 We'll be looking at the no-action alternative, which is
7 to not build the rail line, but we'll also look at a
8 range of other build alternatives, and we're interested
9 in hearing what you folks may have as suggestions for
10 build alternatives as they may be.

11 We will take all those comments that we receive from
12 all the agencies and members of the public and other
13 groups, and we will finalize the scope of study for our
14 draft Environmental Impact Statement. That final scope
15 of study will also identify the build alternatives,
16 including the Applicant's proposed draft, what
17 alternatives we'll be studying in the draft Environmental
18 Impact Statement. Next slide, please.

19 So we've issued the final scope of study and will
20 now begin preparing the draft Environmental Impact
21 Statement. That will require us to collect a large
22 quantity of data, the existing data that's available to
23 us. We will likely need to do some field work to collect
24 data that's not available to us and that we need for our
25 evaluation. We will be doing some computer modeling, and

1 we'll pull all that together and identify the potential
2 impacts of the proposed rail line and the alternatives to
3 the proposed rail line. We'll develop a list of
4 preliminary mitigation to reduce or avoid those impacts,
5 and that will all be issued in a draft Environmental
6 Impact Statement. And when that draft Environmental
7 Impact Statement, or draft EIS, is available, all of you
8 who've requested to be placed on our notification list,
9 either by email or by regular mail, will be notified that
10 that draft EIS is available for you to look at.

11 And we're also interested in hearing your comments
12 on that draft EIS, so we will establish a comment period.
13 I'm not sure what the length of that period will be at
14 this point. But we will establish a comment period and
15 solicit your input and comments on that draft document.
16 We'll also be back out in the project area holding a
17 series of public meetings to hear comments on the
18 document directly. The next slide, please.

19 So we'll take all those comments that we received on
20 the draft EIS, and we'll decide how we need -- how we
21 need to respond to those. Some might require just a
22 written response in the final EIS clarifying an issue or
23 helping you locate the information that may already be in
24 an appendix, for example. Some of the comments may
25 require us to do some additional analytical work or

1 modeling. Some could even require us to do some
2 additional field work.

3 Once we've completed all that, we will then prepare
4 and issue the final Environmental Impact Statement, or
5 final EIS. Within that document, the office that I work
6 in, the Office of Environmental Analysis, will identify a
7 preferred alternative based on the potential
8 environmental impacts, and we also identify a final list
9 of recommended environmental mitigation measures. Those
10 measures will appear as recommendations. The preferred
11 alternative and the mitigation measures will appear in
12 the document as recommendations to our Board.

13 The Board consists -- currently consists of three
14 members. At the time this project is ready for a
15 decision, the Board members at that time will consider
16 the entire environmental record, including the -- and
17 also the results of the review on the transportation
18 merits, which I mentioned earlier is done by other folks
19 within our agency, and they will issue a final decision.

20 In making that final decision, they will consider
21 our recommendations, and typically, in cases where the
22 Board does approve a construction case, they typically
23 impose the preferred alternative that we've identified
24 based on environmental mitigation -- based on our --
25 based on the potential environmental impacts, and they

1 also typically impose our entire length -- our entire
2 collection of environmental mitigation measures.

3 The Board, essentially, what they do, they take that
4 record, environmental record and transportation record,
5 and they literally vote on the project. And the majority
6 carries the decision, so it requires a two-to-one
7 decision to approve the project, or it requires a
8 two-to-one decision to deny the project.

9 If the Board were to approve this project, they
10 would then go to the other federal agencies that need to
11 issue decisions in this case. Currently, we are aware
12 that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will need to make a
13 decision on this proposed project related to the
14 potential impacts to streams and wetlands and other
15 waters of the United States, and the United States Coast
16 Guard will also need to issue a decision related to the
17 major river crossings that are proposed. I think those
18 are mostly confined to -- if not entirely confined to --
19 the state of Illinois. There may also be other federal
20 agencies that need to make decisions in this case. Next
21 slide, please.

22 I just wanted to briefly talk about the purpose and
23 need for the project, and the slide here has been labeled
24 Applicant's Purpose and Need, because this project is
25 their proposal. The Surface Transportation Board did not

1 identify this project. It did not determine a need for
2 this project, did not come up with the idea for this
3 project. So the purpose and need is largely defined as
4 that as proposed, provided by the Applicant, which is the
5 Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Incorporated.

6 Therefore, what they have provided to us is that the
7 proposed rail line would provide the Class I railroads,
8 the Class I railroads being the largest railroads in the
9 United States based on annual revenue. For example, the
10 BNSF Railway and Union Pacific are Class I railroads.
11 They state that the proposed project would provide the
12 Class I railroads and regional railroads that currently
13 utilize the Chicago metropolitan rail network with a more
14 efficient route that would bypass the congested Chicago
15 rail network.

16 They state that the proposed rail line would also
17 add capacity to the regional rail network that could
18 accommodate the existing and potential future rail
19 traffic while avoiding major population centers. Next
20 slide, please.

21 The Applicant's Proposed Action. Based on the
22 information they've provided us to date, the proposed
23 rail line would be approximately 278 miles long, would
24 extend from southern Wisconsin down to Illinois. It
25 would turn east and then end in northwest Indiana. It

1 would have about 22 to 24 connections or interchanges
2 with the Class I railroads and regional railroads along
3 that route. They also propose to construct and operate a
4 rail terminal near Manteno, Illinois, to provide
5 switching and servicing, and also to provide repair
6 services to their rolling stock, including locomotives
7 and rail cars, both the equipment that's owned by
8 themselves, and also, they would offer that service up to
9 their customers. The next slide, please.

10 And here is a map that you've probably seen in the
11 materials that we've offered on our website showing the
12 proposed rail line as put on the table by the Great Lakes
13 Basin Transportation Group. Next slide, please.

14 What I'd like to go over last is two websites we
15 have available for you to stay informed and to
16 participate in our process. This first slide is a shot
17 from our agency's home page, and from this home page you
18 can access areas on our website to file your
19 environmental comments, your scoping comments,
20 electronically. You'll also be able to go on this
21 website and review all incoming and outgoing
22 environmental correspondence related to this case. We
23 try to be as transparent as possible, so all incoming and
24 outgoing correspondence is placed up on our website.
25 That's correspondence related to the environmental

1 review. We also put up correspondence in the formal
2 filing process for this project related to the
3 transportation merits. All that correspondence, incoming
4 and outgoing, is up on our website for you to review and
5 follow. Next slide, please.

6 For our environmental review specifically, we've
7 also launched a project-specific website, and this is our
8 website. This was launched by the Surface Transportation
9 Board for our Environmental Impact Statement, and it's
10 intended to keep you informed about where we are with the
11 project and also provide you resources. It provides some
12 background on the project. It summarizes our
13 environmental review process. It has a page with some
14 great maps. They're maps that we have available that we
15 use during the public scoping meetings that we have held
16 out in the project area the last two weeks. Those are
17 all up on that maps page. We also have a file that you
18 can click on and look at the Applicant's alignment on
19 Google Earth, if you have that software program loaded on
20 your computer.

21 There's also an area on there where you can request
22 to be placed on our notification or mailing list, either
23 by email or regular mail. So if you haven't done that
24 already, I encourage you to get signed up on our
25 notification list. If you have neighbors or friends or

1 relatives who don't have access to a computer and they're
2 interested in following this project, please feel free to
3 add them to the notification list for regular mail, and
4 we'll be happy to add them to the list. Next slide,
5 please.

6 So that ends the presentation portion of today's
7 meeting. Now, I'm going to turn it back to Jennifer, and
8 she's going to -- she's the facilitator for the oral
9 comment portion of the meeting, and she's going to review
10 the rules and then walk you through the process of
11 providing your oral comments.

12 Thank you for calling in today.

13 MS. PIGGOTT: Thanks, Dave. As Dave said, we're
14 going to move into the oral scoping comment portion of
15 today's meeting. I have a few ground rules to go over,
16 but I first wanted to let everybody know we currently
17 have 52 people participating in today's meeting, and we
18 have 32 people who have signed up to provide oral
19 comments today.

20 As you can see on the slide, I'll call up each
21 speaker in the order in which you registered. When I
22 call your name, I will un-mute your line. We do have a
23 number of call-in-only participants today, at which point
24 I will un-mute all the lines to identify those call-in
25 users if one of those is one of our registered speakers.

1 So I do recommend if you don't want the background of
2 where you are or any background conversations to be heard
3 that you self-mute on your own lines as well as a
4 secondary mute option.

5 When called upon, please state and spell your full
6 name for the court reporter and indicate if you're
7 representing a group or organization. We do have a court
8 reporter on the line today that is recording this
9 meeting, and they will record your oral comments just as
10 we did for the in-person meetings over the last two
11 weeks. The court reporter will transcribe your oral
12 comments for use in preparing the final scope of study,
13 so please do not provide any personal information in your
14 comments that you do not want to be made public. Please
15 speak slowly and clearly so that the court reporter can
16 easily record your comments.

17 Each speaker will be allotted three minutes. When
18 30 seconds remains, I'll let you know, and when your time
19 has elapsed, I will notify you and ask that you complete
20 your comments, and then I will re-mute your line in
21 preparation for the next speaker. You do not have to
22 speak for the full three minutes. Out of respect for
23 others who wish to provide comments, please honor the
24 three minutes that you have been allotted. If you think
25 you have more comments than you can present in the time

1 allotted, please make the most important comments first.

2 If you are not able to voice all of your comments,
3 you may submit them in writing. If you have a written
4 statement already prepared, you may read it aloud. This
5 statement may also be submitted in writing as a written
6 comment, and all comments are weighted equally whether
7 you submit them in writing or as an oral comment.

8 Okay. At this time, I will call up our first
9 speaker, which is Arthur LeDoux. And Arthur, I believe
10 you may be a call-in user, so I'm going to un-mute all
11 the lines. Arthur?

12 MR. LeDOUX: Can you hear me?

13 MS. PIGGOTT: Arthur, are you there?

14 MR. LeDOUX: Yes, I'm there. Can you hear me?

15 MS. PIGGOTT: I can hear you. You have three
16 minutes. Go ahead.

17 MR. LeDOUX: Okay. My name is Arthur, A-r-t-h-u-r,
18 LeDoux, L-e-D-o-u-x. I would like to address the
19 detailed map number 12 in the Great Lakes Basin EIS, mile
20 markers 10 through 14. To begin with, in --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What just happened
22 (indiscernible) rail thing.

23 MS. PIGGOTT: Arthur, are you still with us?

24 MR. LeDOUX: Yes.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Go. You're on the clock

1 (indiscernible).

2 MR. LeDOUX: Then we cross Kishwaukee Road at a 75
3 degree turn. We go into a wetland and flood plain area
4 into a farm field that has a live spring. Beyond that,
5 we go into the SM and SF park with another turn that is
6 55 degrees, and at that turn, we are 400 feet from the
7 SM-SF park clubhouse. That club has been there for over
8 a hundred years, and they also do things for Kickin' It
9 For Cancer, and they do other sick and needy type
10 functions at that club. That club will probably be shut
11 down.

12 We continue on from their clubhouse. We cross two
13 gas pipelines at the river, and at that point, at mile
14 marker 12, we start to cut into the riparian buffer and
15 forest that is along the Rock River. That area from mile
16 marker 12 to 13 is also an area for three endangered
17 species of mussel, and that is their habitat. This whole
18 forest, one and one-tenth of a mile of forest will be
19 destroyed in length along the Rock River when they come
20 through. That has been there since before the Native
21 Americans. It has been untouched and unforested. That
22 whole area should be a forest preserve. It doesn't
23 deserve to be destroyed.

24 At mile marker 13, we have another curve,
25 65 degrees, and beyond that a 40 degree turn at

1 (indiscernible). At mile marker 14 we have a 42 degree
2 turn. So in less than three miles, we have 322 degree of
3 turns.

4 Prior to February 29th, this route was supposed to
5 run along Edson Road and take a gentle curve up to the
6 north and run along Meridian Road. I don't know why it
7 was changed, but now that it has been changed, there's
8 over 25 homes directly affected in less than 500 feet
9 from this rail line. Prior to that, the closest home was
10 one quarter of a mile, and they would have gone straight
11 across the river instead of destroying over 6,000 feet of
12 forest.

13 I'm done. And thank you very much for listening to
14 me, and I hope that the STB will consider the CREATE
15 project, because I think that currently is a better
16 alternative. Thank you very much.

17 MS. PIGGOTT: Thank you, Mr. LeDoux.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) destroy a lot
19 of property.

20 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker is Colleen Carroll,
21 who I am not seeing on the list, but I'm going to un-mute
22 all lines in case she's a call-in user. Again, I'm
23 un-muting all lines.

24 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

25 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker is Paul Zanter. I

1 also do not see Paul on the list. I'm going to un-mute
2 all lines again.

3 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

4 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay, folks. Again, if you aren't the
5 person that we're looking for to be a speaker, if you
6 would self-mute, we are getting quite a bit of an echo
7 when we un-mute all the lines.

8 Our next speaker is William LaDow, and I'm going to
9 un-mute all lines to identify Mr. LaDow. William LaDow.

10 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

11 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker is Jason Anderson.
12 Jason Anderson, are you with us today?

13 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

14 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. Our next speaker is Dale Hook.
15 Mr. Hook, are you with us today? Mr. Hook, are you with
16 us today?

17 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

18 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker is Fred Gibson. Mr.
19 Gibson, are you with us today?

20 Our next speaker is Dean Rouch, R-o-u-c-h. Mr.
21 Rouch, are you with us today? Mr. Rouch, are you with us
22 today?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Anybody with you? Anybody at
24 all?

25 MS. PIGGOTT: So --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm here, but I'm not on the
2 list.

3 MS. PIGGOTT: Just so everyone knows, I'm going down
4 the list of individuals that registered for the meeting
5 and indicated that they wanted to provide an oral
6 comment.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKING HEARD ON PHONE LINE

8
9 MS. PIGGOTT: And again, I do have all lines
10 un-muted as we look for our speakers today, so self-mute,
11 if you would.

12 Laura Pisarcik, P-i-s-a-r-c-i-k, are you with us
13 today?

14 Our next speaker is Joseph Bessen, B-e-s-s-e-n. Mr.
15 Bessen, are you with us today?

16 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKING HEARD ON PHONE LINE

18 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker is Rod Gardin,
19 G-a-r-d-i-n. Mr. Gardin, are you with us today?

20 Our next speaker is Michael Rasmussen. Mr.
21 Rasmussen.

22 And I have all (indiscernible). Our next speaker is
23 Dennis King.

24 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

25 MR. PORTER: I'm sorry for interrupting. This is

1 Attorney Rick Porter. We're not -- I'm not hearing any
2 public comments.

3 MS. PIGGOTT: Mr. Porter, this is the facilitator.
4 I'm going through the list of those who have provided and
5 requested to provide oral comments. We have a number of
6 folks that don't appear to be on the line.

7 Our next person that we have registered was Dennis
8 King. Dennis --

9 MR. PORTER: I appreciate the elaboration. I was
10 afraid that I just wasn't hearing them. Thank you.

11 MS. PIGGOTT: No problem. Dennis King, are you on
12 the line? And again, I have all lines un-muted because
13 of the number of call-in users today, just to be sure we
14 don't miss somebody. Our next speaker is Bernie Van
15 Wormer.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are the lines even connected?
17 If nobody is answering, then maybe their line is not
18 connected in.

19 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker is Dale Rardin,
20 R-a-r-d-i-n. And again, I will un-mute (indiscernible).

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This is really disappointing.
22 I was hoping to get some information about the railroad,
23 and all I'm getting is static and blips and
24 (indiscernible) and people talking in the background.
25 I'm getting nothing out of this.

1 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay, folks. I have muted all the
2 lines. Again, we have a number of call-in users today,
3 so to identify our speakers, I'm having to un-mute all of
4 the lines.

5 Our next speaker today is Teresa Petry. I'm going
6 to un-mute all the lines again. Teresa Petry, are you
7 with us?

8 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

9 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker today is Michael
10 Stead. I'm un-muting all the lines.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Perfect. Turn it up a little
12 (indiscernible).

13 MS. PIGGOTT: Folks, I have muted all the lines
14 again. Our next speaker is Michael Stead, who I believe
15 is on the line. I'm trying to identify which speaker he
16 is, so if you are not Michael Stead, please mute your
17 line.

18 Mr. Stead, are you with us?

19 MR. STEAD: I am. Can you hear me?

20 MS. PIGGOTT: I can.

21
22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKING HEARD ON PHONE LINE
23
24
25

1 MS. PIGGOTT: Mr. Stead, did you join the webinar or
2 are you a call-in user today?

3 MR. STEAD: I'm on the phone.

4 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. All right. Go -- hang on just
5 one second.

6 MR. STEAD: Okay.

7 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. Go ahead and start your
8 comments. You have three minutes.

9 MR. STEAD: Thank you. This is Michael Stead,
10 manager of the Rail Safety Section for the Illinois
11 Commerce Commission, and the Illinois Commerce Commission
12 is the regulatory agency for railroad operations for
13 higher railroad operations in the state of Illinois.

14 In addition to having the nation's largest rail hub,
15 Chicago, in our state, we have the second largest rail
16 system of any state in the country, over 7,400 miles of
17 track; 53 current operating railroads currently operating
18 in the state of Illinois; and over 10,000 public highway
19 rail grade crossings, second-most of any state in the
20 country; over 300 interconnected rail crossing warning
21 systems, most of any state in the country; 1,500 trains
22 per day. We're seeing approximately 500 million tons of
23 freight moved on Illinois railroads each year, most of
24 any state; and the second largest number of hazmat
25 material shipments by rail in the U.S., over 20 million

1 tons per year.

2 So leading up to that, with the addition of this
3 proposed new rail line, primarily, a majority of it is
4 going to be operated in Illinois. We're concerned that
5 public safety be addressed to the best level possible, so
6 my comments today are going to be addressed primarily on
7 the highway rail crossings.

8 My recommendation is that all -- that the Great
9 Lakes Basin railroad be required to construct all highway
10 rail crossings as grade separated. In other words, there
11 will not be any grade -- grade level, highway rail grade
12 crossings. If that's not possible for whatever reason,
13 any crossings that are to be constructed at grade should
14 be equipped with four quadrant gate warning systems with
15 vehicle presence detection and pedestrian gate warning
16 systems where necessary. Right-of-way fencing should be
17 installed -- be required to be installed within urbanized
18 areas along the proposed route. Crossing warning systems
19 interconnected with highway traffic signals at locations
20 where signalized highway intersections are located within
21 200 feet of a public crossing should be required, and
22 access to private facilities and public roadways should
23 be provided at all crossings.

24 We're noticing on some locations along the -- along
25 the route, by reviewing the maps that are provided

1 online, that it appears that some of these proposed
2 crossing locations do not provide access to the local
3 area, so we want to make sure those are addressed as part
4 of the EIS process as well.

5 And that's all the comments I have today. Thank
6 you.

7 MS. PIGGOTT: Our next speaker today is Floyd
8 Catchpole. Mr. Catchpole, are you on the line?

9 Our next speaker is Mark Steffen. Mr. Steffen, are
10 you on the line?

11 (Feedback heard on phone line.)

12 MS. PIGGOTT: (Indiscernible.) Our next speaker is
13 James Baird. James Baird, are you on?

14 Our next speaker is Robert Sands. I have un-muted
15 all (indiscernible). Mr. Sands, are you --

16 Our next speaker is Carl Lange. Carl Lange,
17 L-a-n-g-e, are you on the line? All lines --

18 Our next speaker is Shelly Van Dan. Shelly Van Dan.
19 Shelly Van Dan, are you on the line? All lines are
20 currently --

21 Our next speaker is Laura Conversa. Laura Conversa.

22 Our next speaker is Jeffrey White. Jeffrey White,
23 are you (indiscernible).

24 Our next speaker is Adam Gierke, who I see on the
25 line. Adam, I'm going to un-mute your line.

1 MR. GIERKE: Yes, hello, can you hear me?

2 MS. PIGGOTT: Yeah. Can you hear me?

3 MR. GIERKE: Yes.

4 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. Great. You have three minutes,
5 Mr. Gierke.

6 MR. GIERKE: Thank you. My name is Adam Gierke. I
7 am a resident of Porter County, the south end of
8 Valparaiso. Should the Great Lakes Basin railroad go in
9 with its proposed path, the railroad lines will run about
10 a half mile south of my property. Though it doesn't
11 directly affect me, or it doesn't directly affect our
12 property, our property value will actually go down. I
13 realize this is an environmental impact meeting, but I
14 would like to read for you an article from a Porter
15 County Assessor, Jon Snyder, about the financial impacts
16 of properties in the area, so I'll go ahead and read it.

17 "Seeing the proposal for the new rail line through
18 southern Porter County caused me to think deeply about
19 the impact that this proposal would have on local
20 government. With my unique perspective as
21 assessor/appraiser, I'm naturally drawn to the impact
22 this proposed rail line will have on assessed valuation
23 in Porter County. That being said, a proposed rail line
24 in southern Porter County will have a negative impact
25 upon the assessed valuation within the county. In other

1 words, simply having the rail line run through southern
2 Porter County will decrease the total assessed valuation
3 for the county, thereby increasing the burden upon
4 remaining taxpayers such as homeowners and small business
5 owners. There are four reasons that I believe this to be
6 true.

7 First, the property of the railroad itself is
8 assessed by the Indiana Department of Local Government
9 Finance and not the local assessor. While advocating for
10 the taxpayers in relation to the new Porter Regional
11 Hospital, the state of Indiana attempted to direct an
12 assessment of the facility at a value much less than its
13 true market value. Downstate lobbyists continue to
14 convince the legislature to take more control of your
15 local assessor's duties. The state now assesses steel
16 mills, local utilities, and railroads. The assessor has
17 no legitimate way to appeal the state's assessment of
18 these facilities. Second, the personal property" --

19 MS. PIGGOTT: Mr. Gierke.

20 MR. GIERKE: Yes.

21 MS. PIGGOTT: Can you please slow down just a little
22 bit for our court reporter.

23 MR. GIERKE: Sure.

24 MS. PIGGOTT: Thanks.

25 MR. GIERKE: "Secondly, the personal property tax on

1 railroads, including rail cars, inventory, and engines,
2 are captured by the Indiana Department of Revenue into
3 the commuter electric rail service fund. This money does
4 not go to local government to pay for schools, police,
5 fire, and other necessary services. This money goes to
6 pay for rail-related functions only in a way similar to
7 that of a tax increment finance district in the sense
8 that this revenue does not go to pay the cost of local
9 government. Rather, a railroad's tax dollars pay only
10 for the self-serving interest of the railroad itself.

11 Third, the imposition of the rail line in southern
12 Porter County will have an adverse impact on the assessed
13 value of surrounding properties. Prospective purchasers
14 of real estate obviously will pay less for property
15 adjacent to a noisy freight line. When the property
16 becomes worthless, its assessed valuation is less, and
17 therefore, it increases the tax burden on the remaining
18 property owners.

19 And fourth, the rail line in southern Porter County
20 will thwart development in the southern two quadrants of
21 Porter County. Inhibiting development will devalue the
22 assessed valuation of Porter County as a whole.

23 For these reasons, I am strongly opposed to the
24 imposition of the rail line in southern Porter County.
25 We have to plan responsibly for the future growth and

1 development of our county, and this rail line is an
2 obstacle to both progress and growth."

3 That was an article by Jon Snyder, the Porter County
4 Assessor. It was posted in the Northwest Indiana Times
5 April 19, 2016.

6 My name is Adam Gierke. I'm a property owner just
7 north of where the proposed rail line would intersect,
8 and I'm urging the -- I'm absolutely urging the Surface
9 Transportation Board to deny the Great Lakes Basin
10 railroad application. Thank you.

11 MS. PIGGOTT: Thank you for your comments, Mr.
12 Gierke. Our next speaker is Jesse Brown. I'm going to
13 un-mute all lines in case Jesse Brown is a call-in user.
14 All lines (indiscernible). Jesse Brown (indiscernible).

15 Irwin Berger?

16 MR. BERGER: This is Irwin Berger.

17 MS. PIGGOTT: Give me one second (indiscernible).
18 Okay, Mr. Berger, your line is un-muted. You may
19 proceed.

20 MR. BERGER: My name is Irwin Berger. I'm a member
21 of the Cobbs Preservation Partnership. We own property
22 near the intersections of Flora Church Road and Irene
23 Road, near the rail line, proposed rail line, and these
24 are the following concerns that we have.

25 Did the GBLT consider reducing the number of track

1 miles by using as much existing rail and abandoned
2 railroad right-of-ways? It seems they are taking the
3 easy way out by wanting to take land through eminent
4 domain instead of using existing options.

5 Another concern is a large portion of the
6 north-south route from Wisconsin all the way through
7 Boone County in Illinois and even south from there is
8 right on top of the Troy Bedrock Valley aquifer, which is
9 the main aquifer for drinking water in the area, and we
10 believe that this should not -- rail lines should not be
11 built on top of this aquifer. If there's a spill of
12 toxic chemicals, it's possible it could get into the
13 groundwater, affecting the drinking water of all those in
14 the area that use that aquifer for drinking water.

15 Third concern has to do, again, as the other
16 gentleman said about noise pollution, our property is in
17 a very quiet area. There's virtually no noise pollution.
18 The rail line is going to add significantly to the noise
19 pollution in an area that currently does not have hardly
20 any noise pollution. And as the gentleman said, it would
21 affect property values by reducing the property values of
22 all people that own property near the rail line.

23 Another concern we had is: Did the Great Lakes
24 Basin contact all local environmental agencies and state
25 political representatives before they submitted their

1 plan to the Board? It seems like no one in our local
2 area was even familiar with what was going on until just
3 recently, and we're all kind of upset that we really
4 weren't notified until the very last minute. And our
5 group is definitely opposed and would encourage the Board
6 not to allow the GBLT to build on the proposed route that
7 they have given you for consideration.

8 MS. PIGGOTT: Mr. Berger, did that conclude your
9 comments?

10 MR. BERGER: Yes. That concludes my comments.

11 MS. PIGGOTT: Great. Thank you for your comments.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKING HEARD ON PHONE LINE

13
14 MS. PIGGOTT: Mr. Porter, are you with us?

15 MR. PORTER: Yes, I am.

16 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay, Mr. Porter, you may go ahead
17 with your comments.

18 MR. PORTER: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is
19 Richard Porter, and I'm an attorney representing the
20 Perks family who own and operate 1,300 acres of ranch and
21 forest land along the border of Ogle County and Winnebago
22 County, which Frank Patton and the Great Lakes Basin rail
23 line are now proposing to bisect with a railroad.

24 First, we commend the Surface Transportation Board
25 for immediately recognizing that an environmental impact

1 statement must be performed in relation to this project
2 and urge it to consider alternative routes to avoid the
3 severe impacts it will have on the Perks Ranch and the
4 sensitive wildlife and habitat in the area.

5 The Perks Ranch -- excuse me -- the Perks Ranch
6 consists of forest land, wetlands, rolling hills, crop
7 lands, grazing areas for cattle, as well as residential
8 homes. The property was purchased by the family over
9 50 years ago, and several generations have grown up
10 farming, ranching, and recreating on that land. The
11 family has used the ranch to teach their children and
12 grandchildren the values of hard work and perseverance
13 and have opened the land up for education and recreation
14 to many others, including friends, neighbors, sports
15 teams, and ranching groups, like the Junior Hereford
16 Association.

17 The ranch includes a large tract of hardwood forest
18 that is a part of a larger complex of forest that has
19 been identified as critical habitat for migratory birds
20 and other wildlife by the Illinois Department of Natural
21 Resources. The larger forest complex includes two
22 Illinois nature preserves and two forest preserves. If
23 the route is not changed, then the proposed rail line
24 will destroy part of the forest on the Perks property,
25 fragment the larger woodland, and introduce invasive

1 plants and predators into the interior of the forest.

2 The woodlands in that area produce white-tailed
3 deer -- which have been used to repopulate the state --
4 and have unique plant and tree varieties. The operation
5 of the rail line will introduce noise and vibrations
6 which will disrupt the wildlife breeding and feeding
7 patterns and block wildlife movements. Furthermore, the
8 noise, vibration, and nuisance will destroy my client's
9 use and enjoyment of their residential homes.

10 The scope of the EIS should consider the impact to
11 the Perks forest and the nearby preserves, and include an
12 analysis of the alternatives to avoid these severe
13 impacts.

14 The railroad will also destroy the livestock and
15 agricultural operations of the ranch by severing the land
16 into several inaccessible parcels. The additional
17 distances will have to be traveled to the various severed
18 parcels, and costs incurred will result in insufficient
19 revenues to continue operating the ranch or maintain the
20 forest land.

21 The Perks family proposes that at a minimum, an
22 alternative route be used for the western spur of the
23 project to avoid the ranch and the environmentally
24 sensitive areas.

25 We also request the Surface Transportation Board

1 require that a full and complete application be filed by
2 the railroad company and reject any attempt to use the
3 exemption process. Section 10502 exemption is only
4 supposed to be used when, quote, the transaction or
5 service is of limited scope, closed quote. A rail line
6 traversing three different states, 280 miles, numerous
7 wetlands, rivers, natural areas, residential land, and
8 agricultural land is obviously not of limited scope.
9 Thus, the Perks family will be filing a written EIS
10 scoping comment by June 15, 2016, which will include
11 alternative route proposals for the western spur of this
12 project.

13 We respectfully request that the Surface
14 Transportation Board include the Perks Ranch and its
15 proposed alternatives in the scope of its Environmental
16 Impact Statement. Thank you. That concludes my
17 statement.

18 MS. PIGGOTT: Thank you for your comments, Mr.
19 Porter. Our next speaker is Cecilia Ortiz-Carmean, and I
20 see that you are on the webinar, but not through audio.
21 I'm going to un-mute some audio lines to see if I can
22 identify you. Cecilia Ortiz-Carmean, are you with us?
23 I'm going to un-mute all lines now. Cecilia
24 Ortiz-Carmean (indiscernible).

25 Okay. Our last speaker registered is John Radtke,

1 R-a-d-t-k-e. Mr. Radtke, are you with us today?

2 Okay. I have re-muted all the lines. This comes to
3 the end of all of the individuals who registered to
4 provide an oral comment today. We do have remaining time
5 in today's meeting, so those of you who are on the
6 webinar, you can use the function and raise your hand if
7 you would like to provide a comment, and I will call on
8 you. Anyone who raises their hand, I'll call on you, and
9 you can provide an oral comment if you would like.

10 Mr. Barber, can you hear me?

11 MR. BARBER: I sure can. How are you?

12 MS. PIGGOTT: (Indiscernible.) Go ahead. Would you
13 like to expand upon your comments?

14 MR. BARBER: Sure. The name is Robert Barber,
15 B-a-r-b-e-r, Village Administer, Village of Beecher,
16 Illinois, located in eastern Will County. We are in
17 close proximity to the proposed rail port at Manteno, and
18 our concern is regarding the truck traffic that may serve
19 the rail port from the north. The Bishop Ford Expressway
20 turns into I-394 and terminates approximately three miles
21 north of Beecher and dumps into a two-lane road which
22 passes through town.

23 When the Illiana Expressway was discussed, and when
24 we've had planning discussions regarding the South
25 Suburban Airport, the Village of Beecher has always

1 stressed the need for a truck bypass along the west side
2 of town linking I-394 to the Illiana Expressway, which
3 now is being taken place by this proposed Manteno rail
4 port.

5 We are not opposed to the project per se. There may
6 be some regional benefits to providing additional rail
7 service; however, the other surface transportation needs
8 in eastern Will County have to be looked at in order to
9 accommodate a rail port that could be 16 square miles.

10 That ends my comments. Thank you very much.

11 MS. PIGGOTT: Thank you for your comments. Would
12 anyone else on the webinar like to provide a comment? If
13 so, please use the Raise Hand feature.

14 Okay. At this time, I'm going to un-mute the
15 call-in users. Would any of the call-in users like to
16 provide an oral comment? Because we have remaining time
17 in our session today.

18 MS. NOLAN: I have a question.

19 MS. PIGGOTT: Yes. Please state your name.

20 MS. NOLAN: Carol Nolan.

21 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. Go ahead.

22 MS. NOLAN: I'm curious about the impact of the
23 exhaust from the trains that will be, obviously, part of
24 the atmosphere and will join with the moisture up above
25 us and then fall as acid rain on the farmers' crops.

1 Have -- has any -- I've not heard anything about that.

2 And I also think -- am desperately opposed to the
3 way that I see or hear that the railroad is going to cut
4 through the Westville area. It's cutting through my
5 neighbor's farm so that he will walk from his house to
6 the barn over the railroad tracks. And it also will take
7 out a stand of hundred-year-old oaks that, as one person
8 said earlier, are part of the environment or habitat.
9 I'm sure people don't care that much about what happens
10 to an oak tree, but many people do. But a stand of over
11 -- these oaks are over a hundred years old, and losing
12 them would be, I think, a tremendous loss to the
13 community.

14 But I also am worried about the impact of the
15 exhaust on the atmosphere and the acid rain that will
16 fall as a result of it, and also the displacement of us.
17 We will lose our farms to the partitioning, as the
18 attorney spoke, and also, the noise pollution. This is a
19 quiet area, the Westville area.

20 Oh, I hear a freight train once every week or ten
21 days to the west of me. It's about five or six miles
22 away, and it vibrates. There must be a hundred
23 elephants that are being transported on this train. It
24 vibrates the ground so badly that I can feel it when I'm
25 out by my barn. And if I'm in the house, anything on the

1 washing machine vibrates off the machine and onto the
2 floor, and that's one train every ten days. What's
3 happening to my foundation? My window is cracked already
4 from some of these vibrations. What will be the impact
5 on any homeowners today? We just watch our homes crumble
6 into the ground. That's about it. Thank you.

7 MS. PIGGOTT: Ma'am, if you would spell your first
8 and last name for the court reporter.

9 MS. NOLAN: Carol as in Christmas carol, C-a-r-o-l.
10 Nolan, N-o-l-a-n.

11 MS. PIGGOTT: Thank you for your comments. Okay. I
12 have un-muted all of the call-in users again. Would
13 anyone else like to provide an oral comment today as a
14 call-in user? For those on the webinar, please just use
15 the Raise Hand function if you would like to provide an
16 oral comment.

17 MR. SCHEFFER: Yes, I'd like to make a comment.

18 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. Go ahead. Please state and
19 spell your first and last name for the record.

20 MR. SCHEFFER: My name is Thomas Scheffer,
21 S-c-h-e-f-f-e-r. I'm a property owner in Hebron,
22 Indiana, and I have a -- my biggest concern has been
23 mentioned already about the groundwater. As you probably
24 know, all the people along this proposed route rely on
25 well water for our drinking water and farms and whatnot,

1 and if a spill was to happen on these tracks, we're going
2 to be screwed for the next hundred years, because the
3 stuff is going to get into our drinking water. I don't
4 think that's an acceptable risk to take so that somebody
5 can make some money.

6 The other thing is a question about an alternate
7 route. There's a set of high power electrical lines that
8 run east and west. I know -- I believe they were the
9 planned route for the Illiana Expressway, and I know they
10 run from Route 57 in Illinois east and west across into
11 Indiana, and they run just north of the town of Lowell
12 and across I-65, and they continue north of Hebron and on
13 up to the LaPorte area. Seems to me that that might be a
14 viable option for a route to follow along the route that
15 those power lines take. I'm not sure how many property
16 owners would be affected by that, but I'd like to put
17 that out there to check into those power lines as an
18 alternate route. Maybe it would require taking a lot
19 less people's property than what's being proposed.

20 And that's all I've got for today.

21 MS. PIGGOTT: Thank you for your comments. Would
22 any of our other call-in users like to provide an oral
23 comment today? Your lines are un-muted. Okay. I'm now
24 going to un-mute all lines to see if anyone else would
25 like to provide an oral comment today. I'm going to

1 un-mute all lines, so please self-mute if you would not
2 like to provide a comment. Would anyone else like to
3 provide an oral comment?

4 MS. NOLAN: I have one more. Carol Nolan. Carol
5 Nolan.

6 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. Give me one second to mute the
7 rest of the lines. Hang on one moment. Okay, can you
8 hear me?

9 MS. NOLAN: Yes.

10 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay.

11 MS. NOLAN: Can you hear me? Since this is being
12 done to support Chicago and helping its rail lines -- and
13 helping its rail lines get untangled and uncomplicated,
14 we used to sit in the Kensington area on the South Shore
15 train for half an hour waiting to get switched over. It
16 would seem to me that Chicago has miles and miles of rail
17 lines that could be undone, redone, and reclaimed instead
18 of using new land. It's not just because it doesn't
19 work, throw it out and build something new. Fix what can
20 be fixed, unscramble all those rail lines and work
21 through that somehow. I can't see why that can't be
22 done. That would supply a lot of jobs. And I am very
23 opposed to the whole idea of the rail line. We don't
24 need another rail line. We don't need any more highways.
25 We've got enough. That's it.

1 MS. PIGGOTT: Ma'am, if you could please state your
2 full name and spell it for the record just to be sure we
3 have an accurate record.

4 MS. NOLAN: Oh, I spoke before. Carol Nolan,
5 N-o-l-a-n.

6 MS. PIGGOTT: Perfect. I just wanted to be sure.

7 MS. NOLAN: Sure. Just don't come visiting.

8 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay. I'm going to un-mute all lines
9 one more time to see if we have anyone else who would
10 like to provide an oral comment today. All lines are
11 un-muted. Would anyone else like to provide an oral
12 comment today? Again, all lines are un-muted. Would
13 anyone else like to provide an oral comment at today's
14 meeting?

15 Okay. At this point, I will turn it back over to
16 Dave Navecky with the Surface Transportation Board to
17 provide some closing comments. Dave, can you hear me?

18 MR. NAVECKY: Yes, I can hear you.

19 MS. PIGGOTT: Okay.

20 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you, everyone, for participating
21 in today's online scoping meeting. If you have
22 additional comments or you didn't speak and you have
23 comments, I encourage you to submit those to us in
24 writing, and you can file those electronically through
25 our agency 's website, as I mentioned earlier, or you can

1 mail those to me. All that information is available on
2 our project website on how to submit those comments.
3 That's at the www.greatlakesbasinrailEIS.com. And again,
4 thank you very much for participating today, and we look
5 forward to seeing your comments. Thank you.

6 MS. PIGGOTT: Thanks, Dave.

7 One last item. I had a number of people send me a
8 note during the meeting asking if this presentation would
9 be posted, and it will be posted on the project website
10 in the coming days. Thank you for attending today's
11 online scoping meeting for the Great Lakes Basin Rail
12 Line Environmental Impact Statement. This concludes our
13 meeting. Thank you.

14 (Meeting concluded at 2:18 p.m. Central Time.

15 Court reporter disconnected phone and reconnected
16 at 2:40 p.m. Central Time.)
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(Meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m. Central Time.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, JEANNE R. DRUST, a Notary Public, in and for the
County of Elkhart and State of Indiana, do hereby certify:

That I further certify I reported stenographically the
aforementioned webinar of the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line EIS
Online Public Scoping Meeting; that the proceedings were then
transcribed from my original shorthand notes; and that the
foregoing transcript is a true and correct record thereof;

That I am not a relative or employee or attorney or
counsel, nor a relative or employee of such attorney or
counsel for any of the parties hereto, nor am I interested
directly or indirectly in the outcome of this action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my Notarial seal
this 10th day of May, 2016.



Jeanne R. Drust, AAS
Notary Public, State of Indiana
Residence: Elkhart County
My Commission Expires: 1-17-21

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