

The Great Lakes Basin Railroad is an ill-advised proposal that will not serve to improve the lives of Indiana, Illinois or Wisconsin residents because the economic devastation caused by the loss of irreplaceable agricultural land cannot be overcome by a freight line. Once that fertile land is procured for nonagricultural use, it will never again have the capability to produce life-sustaining crops. If you are living, you are dependent on these crops for food. We can't grow new land. We can put railroads in other locations and several alternate routes have been proposed by citizens.

Look at the economics of an \$8 billion federal loan. Is this railroad likely to succeed financially? Will it go the way of most railroads and be bought out of bankruptcy by another railroad for pennies on the dollar? Who will be left holding the loan then? The US taxpayer. You. Me. Our children.

For every field that is crossed, the drainage and irrigation systems will have to be completely redesigned and in many cases will cost as much as the landowner is "offered" for the land itself. Never mind that the loss of the land and the division by the rails will forever cost the farmer a percentage of their crop production. Porter County, IN residents in unincorporated areas have already been assessed additional taxes for storm water management recently and the progress that has been made will be negated by damming up the lower part of the county where the water should flow. Not only will it cause flooding in the areas south of Division, but it will close off the water supply to the Kankakee River Basin. The recreation areas and parks that depend on those resources will forever be changed by the lack of incoming resource water.

Probably the greatest concern of families is the grade rail crossings. We know that our children will be riding buses that have to cross rails multiple times each day going to and from school. We live less than .25 miles from the local high school. Students who live on our side of State Road 2 already have a long bus ride in the morning because of safety issues involved in crossing a state highway where the speed limit is 55 mph. These students will now have to cross the railroad tracks at least twice to get to school. This will increase the length of time on the bus. What are the ramifications of this? Less sleep for the students, more fuel for the buses, more wear and tear on the buses from the grade crossings which deteriorate quickly. This translates into more costs for residents through increased taxes. What is the benefit? GLBR has not given any explanation how we will be benefited other than to say it will be an economic boon.

Finally, the health of region citizens must be taken into consideration. We know from studies that living in close proximity to trains causes health issues from sleep issues to blood pressure to depression. There is nothing that we can do to prevent these problems should you decide that the impact upon us is minimal. Do you want your children to be in a school that is close to a freight line that may carry lethal chemicals? Worse than that, this would occur in an area served by a small number of volunteer first responders. Not only will they have less equipment and training to deal with a derailment or crash, but the physical problem of going through a muddy field to access the site would cause additional delays in containing any spill or release of toxic gas. Look at the news reports and see how often this happens. It is not rare.

I respectfully ask that you consider all of the comments made by the residents who will be directly affected, whose lives will be forever altered by your decision. If positive economic outcomes on one side are considered, then negative outcomes on the other should be also.