

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky,

Watching the local news we saw a neighbor/farmer being interviewed. This is how we found out that our farmland was being coveted by a millionaire and his Great Lakes Basin Railroad. We are Steve and Joan Johnson and are part owners of 150 acres pristine black dirt that has been in Steve's family since the 50s, and homeowners within 1/10 of a mile of the proposed railroad.

Here are some things I understand:

1. Most farmers/landowners are losing 10-20% of their land, which means 10-20% of their income taken away. A billionaire taking away money from the middle class. All future income from taken away when you take away land that is farmed.
2. The train is cutting property in such a way that the land they will leave these farmers with will be very difficult to farm because they are leaving points (like triangles), if it is at all farmable.
3. Property values will go down. The train is going to pass on the small piece of farmland between my in-law's home (who live next door to us) and their neighbor. Our old farmhouse (1/10 of a mile from the track) is limestone walls on dirt. We have put close to \$90,000 into our farmhouse over the last 23 years. . Much of which my husband did himself. We'll never recoup that if we have a railroad so close. Also, will our old home withstand the vibrations of 100 trains a day? My in-laws are in 79 and 86. How will they ever sell their home, if they choose to downsize, with a train running behind and next door to them? To add to this I understand there will be an overpass built in front of their home. Then there will probably be more land taken up just for them to access their home.
4. The potential for permanently damaging something so pure. Chances for spills from the freight. Chances of changing water flowage. Loss of hunting land.
5. The possibility of additional usage of the land such as unsightly electrical lines and underground pipelines.
6. This isn't creating new jobs as we can see. There may be some temporary jobs. Railroad maintenance?

7. Loss of tax revenue for the county and schools due to lower property values and lower incomes from less land ownership.

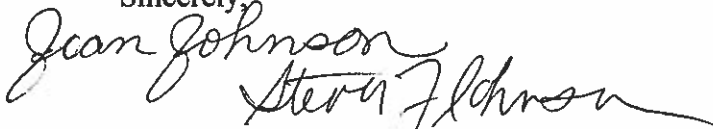
This is impacting our lives and everything we worked hard for. Both of us have put so much of our own work and money into our home and everything we've done will be immediately taken from us.

How is it right to take away the very thing that farmers/landowners need to earn their living?

People say we're holding the land hostage because we're against this. No one understands how one day you think you own something because you purchased it and paid taxes on it, and the next it's being coveted by someone so rich you can't even begin to know where to turn. It's farmland. It needs to stay farmland. Taking away from people who were just doing their jobs, keeping America fed.

That's all we do out here....quietly doing our jobs, helping to keep the U.S. going. Please, let us know you heard these words.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Joan Johnson and Steve Johnson. Joan's signature is in cursive and Steve's is in a more stylized, bold cursive.

Joan and Steve Johnson
6412 Montague Road
Rockford IL 61102

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Mr Steve Johnson
6412 Montague Rd
Rockford, IL 61102-3731

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