

Date: July 14, 2016

Mr. David Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Docket Number FD 35952

The proposed route for the Great Lakes Basin Railroad will affect three (3) of our family farms located in Nettle Creek Township, Grundy County, Illinois. One of the farms is a sesquicentennial farm. This letter is being sent to object to the approval of this railroad line and also to raise various environmental and safety concerns.

Question of Need – Alternatives

Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. "GLBT" states that the purpose is to provide a rail line for Class I railroads with a route outside the City of Chicago. GLBT has not proven any need for the rail line. It is our understanding that two of the Class I railroads have publically stated they will not participate in the proposed rail line and the other four appear to be uncommitted. It is our understanding the GLBT has not consulted or worked with CREATE (Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program) which is an organization already established and is working with the Class I railroads to address the efficiency of the existing rail lines. The proposal to build a complete new rail line at an excessive cost that will cause the loss of thousands of acres of prime farmland doesn't make any sense.

Questions and Concern regarding GLBT's Financial Status

It is our understanding that GLBT has not provided any information regarding the ability to finance this rail line. During a public meeting in Morris, Illinois, the managing partner, Frank Patton, was very vague about financial partners and would not confirm that it had any committed financial partners. He also stated that he was not sure how the rail line would be financed. He did indicate that GLBT would take advantage of any public loans, if available. This raises a great concern. We would request that you require more information on GLBT's ability to obtain financing to build the rail line before any approval. We would also request that GLBT be required to have appropriate funds in escrow or require sufficient bonding to insure that funds are available to pay for substantial damages to the land that the construction will cause and to maintain the rail line if it is built. What about funds to clean up the mess if the line is decommissioned and not totally built or when the rail line does not make enough money to make it viable?

Environmental and Safety Concerns

The proposed rail line bisects three of our family farm parcels. It also will require major changes in our farm operation since the proposed line will close off rural roads and we will have to travel back and forth with farm equipment on busier roads with crossings to farm land on both sides of the proposed rail line. Safety is a definite concern in addition to the added cost.

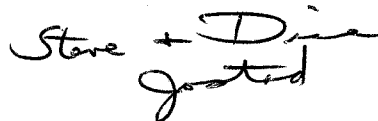
The proposed rail line will disrupt the natural flow of surface water and the construction of the rail line will crush the existing drain tiles within the route. A substantial amount of farmland around the rail line will suffer because of this and there will be a decrease in productivity in thousands of farm acres for many, many years.

The fertile top soil will be moved and disrupted to build the proposed line. Farmers along the proposed route have for numerous generations been caretakers of the land and have taken great care to conserve and protect the rich and productive soil. Why not use established rail lines? Surely, the protection of prime farmland should be a priority.

The proposed route will land lock a residence and farm buildings on one of our family farms. The proposed plan provides for a private crossing which makes no sense. What kind of private crossing will be built? Who will be responsible to maintain this private crossing? Access to the residence and farm buildings will be obstructed by the numerous trains each day. What about emergencies? What about daily living?

From a community perspective, several thousands of tax dollars will need to be spent to train emergency responders in order to handle possible derailments, leaking train cars or chemical spills. New plans will have to be made for quick emergency response around the proposed rail line. What about school bus routes? Shouldn't GLBT be required to pay some sort of an impact fee?

For these reasons and many others that have already been submitted in previous comments to the Surface Transportation Board, we request that BLBT's application be denied.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve + Diane Jorstad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve & Diane Jorstad
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