



SHERIDAN Community Fire Protection District

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ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

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

RE: Docket No. FD 35952
Environmental Scoping Comments to Great Lakes Basin Transportation proposal

The Sheridan Community Fire Protection District by approval of its Board of Trustees tenders this letter suggesting the need to identify a number of environmental issues relevant to the proposed rail line.

Background:

The Sheridan Community Fire Protection District is an Illinois unit of local government, being a fire protection district which provides both fire and emergency ambulance service in the Village of Sheridan and several mile territories surrounding the Village, primarily east of the Fox River. Through an intergovernmental agreement with the Serena Fire Protection District, Sheridan Fire provides emergency ambulance services for the much greater territory encompassed within the Sheridan District. Said service territory of the district is located in LaSalle County, Illinois, 60 to 75 miles southwest of Chicago, IL. While the territory served by the district has several rural communities, the territory is primarily rural agricultural and more than half of the calls to the district for emergency services in scattered rural locations.

Safety Issues

-Ambulance Response Time

The vast majority of calls for services are for emergency ambulance care and time is of the essence to providing effective care, minutes can be the difference between life and death. The Fire District at significant expense pays skilled emergency responders to

be on immediate call to answer emergency medical calls for services. All ambulances are housed and all calls for medical services are dispatched from the Sheridan Fire Station.

The highway commissioners from area wide townships road district have advised the Fire District that they anticipate that multiple rural roads that abut against the proposed rail road will be closed due to no road crossings across the rails. Roads that are not cut off by closing will be restricted, gated crossings or not, by trains estimated to be in excess of a mile long with approximately 130 trains per day. Any reduction in rural roadways that create greater distances for emergency ambulances to reach their destinations, including the site of any call as well as transport there from to area hospitals, will reduce the medical level of care available to residents of both the Serena and Sheridan Fire Protection Districts. Increase in time reduces the ability to save lives. There is no alternative ambulance service in said rural areas.

-Fire Response Time

Response time is also critical to fire calls. Fire Districts in LaSalle County belong to a mutual aid call system. Because our area is rural and districts cannot afford multiple pieces of equipment, it is normal for more than one fire district to be immediately dispatched to a fire call to bring further equipment, water, and personnel.

Such a call system is routinely used for fire calls so that multiple pieces of equipment can respond to fire calls and assist in transportation of water. However, road closing or obstruction by trains in excess of a mile long will inhibit the ability of other fire districts to provide the mutual aid support that the fire district can provide. Additionally, the Village of Sheridan are not equipped to handle any significant rail disaster such as a release of hazardous substances arising from a derailment. While the district networks with other area fire and ambulance services through a mutual aid call box system, there is no local hazardous substance response team. Contamination of the Fox River, Mission Creek and/or shallow sand gravel aquifer use for area drinking water would have far reaching environmental impacts.

-Prison Evacuation

Any derailment in the vicinity of the State Prison with a corresponding need to evacuate the prison population would be catastrophic. The prison population, on average 2100 inmates, outnumbers the local residential population and the ability to promptly evacuate the prison does not exist.

-Bulk Fuel Plant Operations

The proposed railway appears to be in close proximity to a fuel bulk plant which includes propane storage near the south border of the District off County Highway 3. Such fuel plant was intentionally located in a rural area to avoid risks. Locating a high speed rail facility near the fuel plant would significantly increase risks associated with bulk fuel storage.

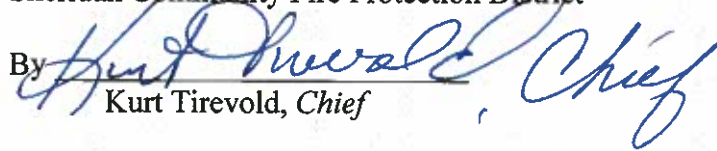
Conclusion

The Sheridan Community Fire Protection District requests that the foregoing be identified as public safety concerns and that any new rail facility be located adjacent to one of the existing extensive transportation networks in LaSalle County without the need of disturbing local roads and endangering the public.

Dated this June 6, 2016.

Sheridan Community Fire Protection District

By

 Chief

Kurt Tirevold, Chief