

May 31, 2016

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD35952
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky,

I am writing to you and the other members of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) regarding the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad (GLBR), Docket No. FD35952.

As a farmer in Kankakee County for more than 6 decades, it is with great respect that I request the STB perform a full review of this proposed project and deem it as unnecessary and unsafe as well as detrimental to the environment, surrounding agriculture, and livelihood of many along its path. I am opposed to this project and ask you to reject the proposal.

One of my farms, located within the segment from mile post 80-90 in Kankakee County, would literally be severed in half by the proposed rail line. The southern half of the property would be totally landlocked. There would be no road or easement to access that half of the farm. Not for land management, crop planting, weed control, or harvesting. Many other farms and pastures with livestock would also be divided and negatively impacted in similar ways. Additionally, the rich soil that would be taken out of production every year for this project would reduce the nation's food supply at a time when our country is expected to produce more, not to mention the loss of income every year for current and future farmers. The massive regional rail port at Manteno, also proposed in this project, would needlessly consume almost 15,000 acres of prime farmland that would never be returned to agricultural production again and would displace many residents unnecessarily.

An environmental concern I would like you to consider is subsurface drainage. Currently, there are two 13 inch underground field tiles that run through my farm and the neighboring farms. These two large tubes, buried beneath the surface, effectively drain over 400 acres. Adequate drainage is necessary to remove excess surface rainfall to prevent soil erosion and damage to crops. These underground tiles could not withstand the extreme weight of locomotives and heavy rail cars on the surface and could collapse causing water retention and area flooding. Without proper drainage here, the rail line itself would be unstable, at risk of sinking causing a hazardous spill, or even a derailment. Not only is this an environmental issue, but it is a safety one, as well.

The GLBR project should not be a viable consideration when the U.S. Department of Transportation, the State of Illinois, and other Chicago-area metropolitan agencies already have an ongoing national and regional rail project in place. The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) was initiated to provide additional rail capacity and is successfully relieving regional rail congestion. I suggest we let the benefits of CREATE continue to emerge.

Lastly and most importantly, the safety of our children is at stake. This railroad project would increase the risk associated with transporting children safely to and from school and other activities. The sheer number of railroad crossings on township roads would present a significant danger to school busses, teenage drivers, and parents and would create chronic traffic delays to others on the roadways. The high number of railroad crossings would also impede the ability of first responders, largely volunteers, to reach, protect, and save the lives of residents throughout the county. Police, ambulance, fire, and rescue support staff, would, at times, encounter significant delays due to the inability just to cross the tracks. With up to 110 trains per day expected on the rail line, the loss of life due to this project is a distinct possibility.

In closing, it is for these reasons I implore you to give a full review to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad proposal and reject the proposed project. I appreciate your consideration and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond Ruder". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Raymond Ruder
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Bourbonnais, IL 60914

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