

November 1, 2016

Docket #FD35952
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

The newest "preferred" Great Lakes Basin train route announced in September now cuts completely through Winnebago County, IL. This is life changing and we deserve the right to formally comment. **As a citizen/land owner, I respectfully request the Surface Transportation Board open a new comment period and allow our voices to be heard.**

Since this route was announced, local townships (including Shirland/Rockton) and our county board (Winnebago) have heard the outrage from its citizens. **Our leaders voted to oppose this toll railroad route due to the great harm it causes on so many levels.**

Safety to citizens would be greatly impaired. The western half of the county will be negatively impacted and nearly cut off from emergency medical services in Rockford due to train traffic. That is all 3-major hospitals, longer response times for police/fire/EMT services, and critical emergency responses to potential (probable over time) derailments.

Environmental impact would be devastating to long term conservation strategies. Soil/water conditions on the route: includes major, interconnected waterways (Rock, Pecatonica, and Sugar Rivers). Ag disruption: loss of valuable farm land, soil irrigation systems, multiple rail crossings, road closings, and economic losses to family farms.

The irreparable damage that will be done by this railroad project far exceeds the proposed benefits. In the 21st century, collaboration at every level is the key to success. The solution to rail congestion in the greater Chicago area is already happening. The **public/private group, CREATE**, has invested years and billions in capital dollars to address the stated problem. **Your support of that initiative is the preferred solution.**

The proposed Great Lakes Basin railroad project **would allow a private company to use eminent domain to take land for private economic gain.** It will greatly disrupt long standing, private property ownership along any rail route. Local governments/school districts will need to spend valuable tax dollars to realign roadways for school buses and emergency services vehicles to preserve the safety of our children and citizens.

I urge the Surface Transportation Board to make a "NO BUILD" decision and let the CREATE group finish its work. Allow the citizens in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin already impacted by these proposed rail routes to get back to being contributing, tax paying citizens in their local communities.

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