

Mr. Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 35952
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Surface Transportation Board concerning Docket No. FD 35952,

Thank you for considering public input. This letter will address how the present route will impact our personal farming operation.

Environmental Impact Study points:

We are writing this submittal as living on a farm east of GLBT's narrative proposed route near mile marker 209.5. We understand if our neighbors refuse to sign with GLBT, that they will knock on our door. We also rent land on both sides of the narrative proposed route between mile markers 212-219.5. Much of that land has wetlands, waterways, extensive drainage tile and other sensitive areas. Both sides of our family have farmed in the Winnebago-Boone Counties since the mid 1800's. Marshall has an University of Wisconsin animal science degree and Julie has an agronomy degree from the University of Illinois and we both have served on many farm and conservation boards. We farm land with entrances on Capron, Orth, Garden Prairie, Edson, Wange, Blaine and Poplar Grove Roads. We will need to cross the narrative proposed route to get between fields, to get supplies, to go to town, and to go to the hospital. Our grandchildren's school bus will cross the tracks multiple times as they attend Capron Grade School just downwind from the tracks. Basically, we will not experience any benefits but instead potentially experience losses by increased fuel costs, increased time costs, increased flooding, increased safety threat, and a potential hazardous contamination of our drinking water, land, and air.

Transportation Systems

*With all the potential road closures of Orth, Angling, Edson, Blaine, Randall and Coon Trail, our time to get to the other side of the tracks will increase greatly. We do not have any extra time in the spring and fall. Our time in the spring is worth close to \$1000/hour if we are delayed in planting or treating our fields on time. With the roads above potentially closed, we will be forced to use heavily traveled roads like Hunter Road. With our slow moving farm vehicles we avoid busy roads like Hunter because of all the traffic and all the no-passing zones that exist because of the hills on them.

*Construction during those critical seasons would also impact our productivity.

Safety

*Road closures and grade crossings will also delay the transport to any hospital. We live on the east side of the proposed tracks and the hospitals are all on the west side of the same tracks and not even in our county!

*Mitigation will not bring back any life loss or life quality change because emergency vehicles were delayed because of road closures or train passage. Our family has relied on multiple rescue squad trips with one child coding in the rescue squad, so please do not tell us that a few more minutes/miles will not make a difference.

*Because we are downwind from the proposed route- our farm will be affected if a volatile hazard arises. We have 100's of commercial high value free range non-GMO poultry that will be impossible to evacuate quickly. And we are quite sure the 200 plus dairy herd south of us will not be evacuated quickly either.

Land use

If the route would shift to any of our properties, we would resist. We have invested a great deal into improving the productivity of our land and are presently transitioning some of our acres to organic; by the time GLBT might even begin construction we will have over 71 certified organic acres. Land has been a great investment for us by increasing in value while producing annual income for our family. . \$20,000 per acre would not entice us.

Biological resources

We own a mature woods- including Boone County's second largest trunk diameter according to an Earth Day competition. We have chosen to pay taxes on our woods and not convert to farmland. We believe in its ecological importance as a pollinator habitat, its diversity of wildlife, and air purifier. It has at least two wetlands. Putting a railroad through it would destroy it by clearing a path for invasive species. We have invested a great deal into planting and nurturing over 20-100 new trees, shrubs and or perennials per year. Most of them were selected for wildlife or pollinator habitats.

Water Resources

We live in the Troy Bedrock Valley. For over 100 years our farm only got it's drinking water from shallow well points (obtaining water from a depth of eight feet). We had the best tasting water and those points never went dry.

The photo below is what we had happened when we tried to put in a five foot crawl space- we hit gravel/sand and water at about four feet. We now have a 3 foot crawl space with a battery backed up sump pump. It was a costly mistake-refilling it to code. This home will be just over $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the train. Our point wells have been removed when we dug a 40 foot well into that same aquifer. The closest tree line in the background is the Piscasaw Creek, which has an amazing flood plain that often claims part of our acres. We live in the Troy Bedrock Valley. If a hazardous spill occurs in this valley the spill will go through topsoil, sub soil, then hit the water filled gravel and sand aquifer that most our valley's wells tap into. Proposed mitigation- no hazardous materials should be allowed in Troy Bed Rock Valley because there is no way to stop the penetration of materials into the aquifer that serves thousands of people. People cannot afford to dig deeper wells and I am pretty sure GLBT as an LLC will not stay around to dig everyone new wells and instead abandoned the business. If they have failed to secure enough insurance, then we the taxpayers will be left with the cleanup bill.



* We farm along the Piscasaw Creek. We are very proud of its Class A standing. We work very hard to keep it healthy. We enjoy both canoeing and fishing in its waters. Unfortunately because the land on either side of the creek is relatively flat and full of wetlands, we also get flooded by the Piscasaw Creek. On an average year we can have over 35 acres flooded for short periods of time. Because the crop “can hold its breath” for a few days our losses are not always permanent. But putting a railroad crossing over the Piscasaw Creek that may not span the entire flood plain will cause us to be flooded for longer times and more times. We could not stand to loose more acres and for more years if flooding is prolonged by the flood plain being altered down stream. Proposed mitigation- crossing should span the entire flood plain in order to not interfere with present flooding patterns. We pay rent per acre for that farm- whether we get flooded out or not.

We also farm on either side of the Geryune Creek- the same issues exist for it- changing the flooding patterns will effect the drainage of our fields- adding any more days to the water retreating will likely cause crop death.

Follows is one of the soils found by the creek: **DRAINAGE AND SATURATED HYDRAULIC CONDUCTIVITY:** Moderately well drained. An intermittent apparent high water table is at a depth of 61 to 107 cm (2.0 to 3.5 feet) below the surface at some time between February and April in most years. The potential for surface runoff is low. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high or high (4.23 to 14.11 micrometers per second). Permeability is moderate.

Air Quality

Because we live one mile downwind from the siding rail- trains idling for hours concerns me.

Noise and Vibration

Again being one-mile away- will the noise be sufficient to cause sleep issues?

Thank you for considering the environmental impact on our farming operation even though the narrative proposed route does not go through any land we farm.

Marshall and Julie Newhouse

Capron, IL