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May 19, 2016

Dave Navecky  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street SW  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Docket Number FD35952

Dear Mr. Navecky,

As a landowner and a taxpayer in the State of Illinois I am writing to stress my opposition to the Great Lakes Basin Transportation proposed railroad, which consists of a rail line approximately 278 miles in length, from LaPorte, Indiana, through the State of Illinois to a point in the town of Lima in Rock County, Wisconsin. I urge and request the STB pursue the "no-action alternative" of denying the petition or application of GLBT due to the negative environmental, safety, social, and economic impact the rail line would have for the following reasons:

I am not an environment expert, but these things I can see happening:

- It will threaten Illinois and Indiana's waterways. This railroad will dissect hundreds of streams that lead directly to our rivers, causing potential hazardous waste run-off
- It will disrupt an unknown number of irrigation systems, which will cause flooding areas with increase if mold, insects and disease to the regions
- It will threaten the drinking water of all the communities it passes through.
  - The farming communities this railroad passes through and near all rely on well water for their homeowners. The use of hundreds of thousands of railroad ties that are treated with Creosote, a known carcinogen, would seep into the ground water, risking the wells of ALL communities that it passes through, as well as any remaining wildlife.
- The railroad will potentially carry hazardous materials at high speeds, causing a potential threat to the areas
- It will cause a financial hardship on the communities it affects – these small communities do not have the means to provide emergency personnel in the case of catastrophic accidents.
- It will destroy 14,000 acres of prime farmland in Sumner Township, Illinois alone. This farmland produces MILLIONS OF DOLLARS of food product each year. It is not just free and unused land to be exploited. Once we lose farmland, we cannot "grow" more.
- The disruption of tree line windbreaks will exasperate land erosion.
- It will negatively affect the wildlife that shares this land with us. (We personally have spent several years cultivating an environment for the endangered Monarch butterflies.) But this land is also home to deer, coyotes, hawks, owls, a multitude of birds and other small mammals. Their home environments will be gone forever.
- It will create noise pollution for any community it is near, disrupting concentration of school children and the health of those remaining near the railroad.
- It will create air pollution in the entire region.

The railroad is NOT wanted, not by just the individuals it affects, but the COUNTIES it passes through and the RAILROAD COMPANIES it is supposedly for:

- Six of the 11 counties which are affected by the railroad have already formally made opposition resolutions:
  - Rock County, WI
  - LaSalle County, IL
  - Grundy County, IL
  - Lake County, IN
  - Porter County, IN
  - Lee County, IN
- This project is opposed by the areas it is supposedly serving
  - Chicago Department of Transportation is opposed
  - Union Pacific Railroad is opposed
  - Norfolk Southern Railroad is opposed
  - BNSF Railroad recently put 4,600 workers on furlough because of declining cargo traffic (rail cargo fell 2.5 percent in 2015)
  - Canadian National already purchased other railroads which, their comment being "allows us to seamlessly connect our five rail lines entering the city (Chicago), avoiding those crowded inner city rail corridors."
- Grant Park, IL (my home town) is most affected as it includes and borders the proposed rail yard.
  - More than 1/3 of Sumner township will be TAKEN, displacing hundreds of homeowners and taxpayers
  - The loss of students and taxpayers will close our award-winning schools.
  - Property values for hundreds of individuals will plummet
  - Enormous tangible and intangible costs would be imposed on residents and owners of property that fall on or near the path of the rail line.
- The proposed rail yard is FOUR TIMES LARGER than the LARGEST rail yard in the WORLD. I can't help but believe that this is a veiled way to grab land to sell off at huge profit (at the homeowners' expense) by the speculators that would be funding this project.

I know the Surface Transportation Board doesn't care about the individuals that this project will affect, but I'm adding these comments also. You are in a position to save OR ruin the lives of thousands of people:

- It will grant unfair eminent domain rights to individuals that are building the railroad for their personal gain – it is NOT a federal or state project
- It will destroy the lives of thousands of residents living in the path of the project
- It will put hundreds of individuals out of work – namely the farmers and their families that work the farms
- It will put a financial burden on farmers losing their entire farms – they have investments in equipment that will not "go away"
- It will destroy the way of life that thousands have chosen by moving to rural areas for a wholesome way of life in which to raise their children

Please oppose this project.

Sincerely,

  
Sharon R. Garey  
Grant Park, IL

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