

July 7, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Navecky,

We are opposed to the Great Lakes Basin Railway (GLB) for the various reasons outlined in this document.

Socioeconomics

This project will alter the landscape of rural areas throughout three states. Those living near the areas or the railroad/utility corridor will have negative economic consequences. It would appear that the ultimate goal of the project is to transform the areas around the railroad/utility corridor into industrial areas. The GLB website touts the increase of property values along the project. The only way the property value will increase because of the project would be because of a change of use to industrial. Farmland does not increase in value because of railroad and utilities running through them. The increased drainage problems and cost of cut-off fields would cause the property value of the farms to decrease. Once the zoning and use of the farm land changes to industrial property, the value increases tremendously. The area of the proposed project in Indiana and eastern Illinois has also been the sought after for a private toll road (Illiana Expressway). The prospects of a highway coming through the area increase significantly with the utility/railroad corridor in place.

Residents living around this area will not participate in this increase in property value. Quite the opposite will most likely be the case for homeowners. Residential real estate appraisers will deduct value for comparable properties when one is adjacent to a railroad. Given the choice between living in a serene rural setting and an industrial area which would you choose? Would you pay more to live near a 110-train-a-day set of tracks with a view of high tension wires? A look at current residential property values near industrial areas versus rural areas will clearly show that homeowners are in for a big loss.

The GLB refuses to name its investors. It claims that it is not relevant information. GLB wants the government to step in and take property away from unwilling sellers at the value of its current use so that a group of unnamed private investors can convert the land to a new use and reap the benefits of the government taking and rezoning the land. This is classic "crony capitalism."

At a price tag of eight billion dollars one can assume that the "investors" in this project are extremely wealthy. Do the political connections of those that stand to benefit from this project matter? For most middle class people, their home is their greatest investment. Clearly homeowners' investments in the three-state areas will suffer. They face reduced property values, higher insurance rates (railroad tracks will increase response times for the volunteer fire and emergency responders), possibly having to obtain flood insurance, higher property taxes (cost of safety equipment), increased transportation cost (fuel burned waiting at railroad tracks and wear and tear on vehicle from crossing railroad tracks) and lower quality of life.

This project in essence will transfer the wealth of thousands of middle class citizens to unnamed wealthy private investors. Do the political donations of those who stand to profit from this matter? We think so. It is very easy to

secretly help “friendly politicians” gain public offices that make the decisions to help one gain wealth. Do taxpayers deserve transparency from the government?

This project is designed to use the hand of government to help unknown wealthy individuals obtain more wealth at the expense of the middle class. This project will not benefit society as a whole but a select few while hurting many. The will of the people in the areas affected should be taken into account. These are not transactions between willing buyers and sellers. This is not a project that benefits the masses like railroad expansion a century ago. This is one of worst examples of “Crony Capitalism” ever.

To our knowledge, there are two major railroads that have said they will not use the railway. There are no known users of the railway. It would appear that this railroad is being built on speculation with the end goal of turning the area adjacent to the railway into an industrial area. Thereby, creating demand for the railroad through the industrial customers that would be adjacent to the railroad. “If you build, it they will come.” With unknown investors in the GLB, are these investors, people or entities that currently stand to benefit from a change of use? Have they already purchased options on properties, well before this plan was submitted on speculation that they could use the government to change the land use and therefore, create well for themselves? The large clouds of secrecy around those who stand to benefit make one wonder.

If our government has determined that the Keystone pipeline project, which is much less invasive to local residents, has known investors and known benefits to the public and it was not approved, why should a project shrouded in secrecy that disrupts the lifestyles and livelihoods of thousands of people be approved?

Sincerely,

Miranda & Richard Serletic

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