

**Emerald Grove Cemetery Auxiliary
Bradford Township, Rock County, WI**

May 2, 2016

Dave Navecky
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

RE: Great Lakes Basin Rail Line Proposal Docket No. FD 35952

Dear Mr. Navecky:

The members of the Emerald Grove Cemetery Auxiliary wish to express our concerns regarding the impact of the proposed rail line on our cemetery. It was established February 26, 1850 and has three parcels designated for graves. Two parcels are approaching maximum capacity. The third parcel is available for future lots and is used for parking, etc. The entire cemetery is built on an upward slope and this third parcel, at the top, is where the rail line crosses.

Listed below are negative impacts to our cemetery if the proposed rail line is approved:

- Smaller volume of future lot sales due to permanent destruction of cemetery acreage which also leads to decreased perpetual care income.
- Ambiguity of GLB's proposed "future growth" may mean additional land loss.
- Loosing local control over personal property by each individual lot owner.
- Noise pollution for families visiting loved one's graves and the inability to schedule an interment that is solemn and peaceful.
- Crumbling of historic headstones and monuments due to vibration and pollution.
- Additional financial burden when the natural grade of the land is altered resulting in surface run off causing erosion problems, monument movement or ponding.
- Stagnant water leading to issues with mosquitoes, wildlife and odors.
- Improper maintenance of rail line easement leading to growth of noxious weeds degrading our well-kept cemetery.
- Possibility of hazardous material spills and derailments leading to potential ground water contamination ruining our well and increased financial burden.
- Additional access problems if township roads are altered or closed because there is already a closed railroad bridge cutting off cemetery access from the south.
- Change in road usage patterns by large farm equipment and trucks causing more problems for people trying to access the cemetery.

- Longer response times for emergency vehicles if needed at the cemetery.

Finally:

- Extreme risk associated with an unproven railroad-building company to complete this 278 mile project and make it profitable.
- An entity with undisclosed financial backers, would be given power through Eminent Domain to destroy our landscape and the life's work of past, present, and future generations.
- Unwillingness to openly share future detailed plans about the utility provision in the proposed easement.

The Emerald Grove Cemetery is cataloged as a Wisconsin burial site with the Wisconsin Historical Society. Currently, the cemetery is the final resting place of 120 veterans from the Civil War through present conflicts. In 1878, our ancestors made plans for the first Decoration Day to honor the soldiers buried there. Each Memorial Day since children march from the church up to the cemetery to decorate each veteran's grave with flowers and a flag. Many of the children who march are the sixth and seventh generation of those who are buried there. The biggest hurt in this rail line proposal is the disrespect and disregard for our ancestors interned in the Emerald Grove Cemetery. These departed family members entrusted us with continuing to honor and respect our dead through the perpetual care of our cemetery. If this rail line is approved, our ability to honor their wishes will be compromised.

If you have any questions please contact Barbara Andrew at 608-931-4523 or andrew1@litewire.net.

Sincerely,

Members of the Emerald Grove Cemetery Auxiliary

Vicky Dross
 Sharon Roberts
 Cathy Hampton
 Barbara Andrew
 Marlis Goessling
 Ronna (Morton) Ballmer, President
 Rosemary Scott Treasurer
 Jane Stevenson
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