

July 13, 2016

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

Re: DOCKET No. FD-35952

RE: ILLINOIS CENTENNIAL AND SESQUICENTENNIAL FARMS(20 ILCS 205-15)

Even though I live in DuPage County, I am the owner of farm land that the proposed railroad will cut right through the middle of our farm near Maher and Goodfarm Roads, Gardner, Illinois. This is where I was born and raised. And there is one reason why I own this property. It is a very proud and well known Maher Illinois Centennial farm originally purchased by my great grandfather in 1869 and I wanted to maintain its status. My great grandfather built the home with his own hands. My sister now lives in the farm house he built and farms the land for us with her husband. I purchased this land for the sole purpose of maintaining the Illinois Centennial farm in our family and helping my family. **I intend for my children to keep this status.** At great expense, I have foregone profits or making money off this property simply to keep the family farm going. The railroad would be so close to the house it would greatly effect the way of life in the home and farm labor on this land. I assure you, after consulting many relatives, not one of my family will want to live there with a train so close. It will ruin our family history which I treasure more than anything. It would also destroy the means our family has adapted to keep the home stead running. Right now, as small farmers the only way to make ends meet is to supplement the budget with a hunting business on the farmland in the off season.

I attended the STB meeting in Seneca, Illinois to obtain information. Many stated my concerns. But unbelievably, when I attended a question and answer session with Mr. Frank Patton of Great Lakes Basin, later in Morris, Illinois, he could state with a straight face, he believes he is giving greater value to our farmland. Please know, as much as this is a personal opinion of his, I consider it an insult. We own the land and determine the value of the land we own. I assure you he is NOT giving me anything of value. I value our soil and our air and our family farm. I want our heritage intact, to pass down to my children. It is my property. It is my business. And this will hurt everything we have worked for to maintain. He is trying to achieve Eminent Domain for a private corporation's gain. I will fight his evil corporate railroad baron greed with every means I have possible.

By the time this process is completed, it is very likely ***our farm will reach the honored status of Sesquicentennial Farm (2019)***. In 2014, there were approximately 600 Sesquicentennial Farms in Illinois. The application from the IL Department of Agriculture states the program was established to honor the generations of farmers. Please notice that on the Centennial Family Farm Award attached, which hangs proudly framed in our family home states: ***"But we, the Governor and Director of Agriculture of this State, hope it will stand as a symbol of our priorities— —a message to the agricultural community of this State that we consider it important to maintain a strong farm economy."*** Please do not let this statement of a Governor and State Department go unnoticed. Please consider the importance of this family history and the history of Illinois. We were once considered a priority. It is important enough for our State to pass legislation only to be flouted by a private company seeking private gain. My family history would be wiped out of this program, because we would no longer be able to support this farm and afford to continue farming. Our farms and the quality of the soil in Illinois are second to none. Yet they continue to be depleted at every turn in the name of greed. Please do not consider the easement of 200 feet through our land, the only taking. We are losing so much more than just the actual easement. We have been working on our legacy and what we want to leave to our children for almost 150 years.

Mr. Patton smugly stated at the Morris, Illinois question and answer he had two investors that could pay the whole bill. The look he gave us at that time showed lack of care and disdain for the people he was addressing. We need an advocate to help us from big money taking over our most valued assets that can not be bought. Thank you for your concern and help in keeping the small farms left in Illinois from being destroyed by big business corporate greed.

Sincerely,



Mary Brigid Maher Braden
276 E. South Street
Elmhurst, IL 60126

STATE OF ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
in cooperation with
ILLINOIS PRODUCTION CREDIT ASSOCIATION
presents the

CENTENNIAL FAMILY FARM AWARD

to

Thomas Maher

The Centennial Family Farm Program will provide only a small measure of recognition to those families who have lived from the soil for generations. But we, the Governor and Director of Agriculture of this State, hope it will stand as a symbol of our priorities—a message to the agricultural community of this State that we consider it important to maintain a strong farm economy.

Signed this 16th day of October 1922


Governor


Director of Agriculture

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Braden
276 South St.
Elmhurst, IL 60126-4024

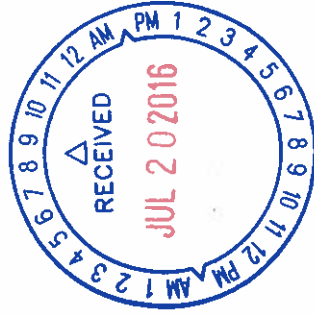


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