

Ken Blodgett
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Blodgett,

I am writing to you about the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line project. I have been doing research on the issue and have discovered that your agency is in charge of preparing the environmental review for the project. As a concerned citizen of Illinois, I urge you not to approve the project as it is.

Although Mr. Frank Patton wants to construct the line to benefit commuters into Chicago and people in the suburbs, I believe it will have severe consequences for people living in rural areas of Illinois. The proposed line would use eminent domain to seize farmland, destroying productive soil and dividing small farms. It would pass near homes and businesses, causing noise and air pollution for the residents and devaluing their property. The presence of a rail line cutting through towns would act as a deterrent against future growth, not an encouragement.

Even more importantly, the rail line would come close to many important sources of water, including the Kankakee, Kishwaukee, Fox and Illinois Rivers as well as several shallow aquifers. The act of constructing the railroad in itself will contaminate these bodies of water. After the line is built, trains carrying hazardous materials such as crude oil will be traveling near to these bodies of water, and any leaks or crashes would prove disastrous. Not only is this an issue for the environment and the organisms that live in those bodies of water, it is an issue for all the counties who get their drinking water from these rivers or aquifers. I'm sure you're aware of these issues, but I want you to know that I care about them. I don't believe the rail line can be built in a way that would not jeopardize these sources of water, and I don't think the risk is worth any potential costs.

Finally, the rail line would disrupt undeveloped spaces. It would cut through forests and wetlands, disrupt restoration projects, and damage habitats for all sorts of wildlife, including endangered species. The noise and vibrations from passing trains would make these forests less habitable. The line would also pass near state parks and forest preserves. One that I have specific connections to is the Kankakee River State Park. My family and I have gone camping and hiking there many times, and the presence of a railroad would absolutely be detrimental to our experience.

I recognize that train traffic in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs is an issue that can be improved, as Frank Patton wants to do. However, there is already a project in place to work on that. The United States Department of Transportation is working with the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program to fix the same problems. This

program already has funding and is working on initiatives that would not require new lines to be built, natural spaces to be contaminated, or farms and towns to be disrupted.

You may have discovered the same problems in your analysis of the project, but I urge you not to write them off as acceptable losses. They are not acceptable to me, especially not when there is another potential solution in place. The well-being of the people and natural spaces in Illinois is vitally important to me, and I will be watching the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line project closely as it continues to develop.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Katherine Alaks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Katherine Alaks
3125 Morton Ave.
Brookfield, IL 60513

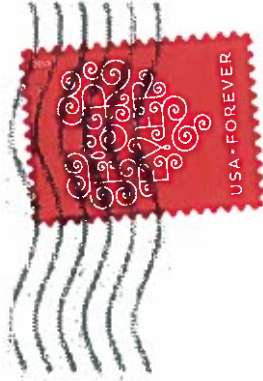
11571



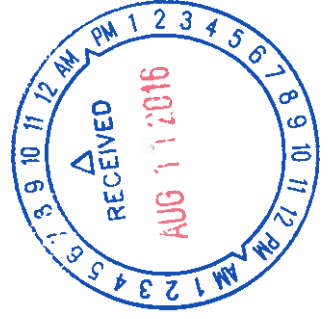
Miss Katherine L. Alaks
3125 Morton Ave
Brookfield, IL 60513

CAROL STREAM IL 601

05 AUG 2016 PM 3:1



Ken Blodgett
Sufface Transformation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington DC 20423



20423-

