

Re: Document NO FD-35952

My name is Monica Zimmerman and I live in Earlville, IL. I am writing this letter as a mother, daughter, and wife of farmers that will be greatly impacted if the Great Lakes Basin Railroad is allowed to trespass through our community.

My first concern is how it will affect our farming practices. My husband and father-in-law are great stewards of the land that we farm. They practice conservation methods and do their very best to limit the amount of trips across the field resulting in less compaction, less fuel used, and less wear and tear on the equipment. This railroad would reverse everything that they have worked very hard to accomplish. Today's farmer takes great pride in how they manage their land. They have technology that allows them to know exactly where fertilizers need to be applied which means less money being spent on fertilizer, fuel, wear on the equipment and less waste. Unfortunately I have to disagree with Mr. Patton, that field tile will not be busted, not only from the weight of the train crossing it, but from moving earth to build the railroad bed. With field tile busted and the natural flow of water being altered, fertilizer that is applied would in essence be wasted if heavy rains come through concentrating the fertilizer in areas where it is not needed = money lost!

Another concern I have is that my husband and I are not landowners, we are tenants. This proposed railroad would actually be taking money OUT of our pocket with loss of acreage due to the 200 foot easement and the amount of topsoil that will be taken from the surrounding area to build the 1% grade that is needed. With the disruption of the natural flow of water and field tile busted, then you have flooded fields that are useless. Money was spent to prep those fields for corn and soybeans and now everything is under water with little chance of draining and drying out. Money out of our pocket trickles down to us not having that excess cash to give to our community, our church, and to our son's school. There are many farmers in the area that are affected by this rail that are not landowners and would potentially be in the same situation.

Derailments are a constant threat. Since no one seems to know what will be hauled on this rail, how is an EIS completed? What happens when there is a derailment and toxic liquid is released into our soils and leaches into our aquifers? My son's school would be less 5 miles from this proposed railroad.

Great Lakes Basin is promising "free" electricity. We are very confused by that because the Illinois Farm Bureau has already stated that the 50 feet Mr. Patton is promising for this utility is illegal. AND apparently the Surface Transportation Board has no authority in granting that? How can someone promise something that is not legal? Another question that is raised is WHO is putting in this "free" electricity? I am sorry but nothing is ever "free" and if it truly is "free", for how long?

Mr. Patton has been spouting off that he will give landowners \$20,000 per acre. How considerate of him; however, from what I understand is that if Federal Grant Money is used, he has to pay market value. Who will be appraising the land? He also claims that this proposed railroad will increase property value? From recent articles read, according to realtors along the proposed route, the market has slowed since this proposed railroad has made the news.

Another item that Mr. Patton and his partner Jim Wilson promises is that this will be the "world's largest quiet zone" as if that is supposed to persuade us? There is a Federal Railroad Administrations' Train Horn & Quiet Zone Rule that I wonder if they are aware of. According to Union Pacific at [www.up.com](http://www.up.com), quiet zones are not up to the railroads and in fact Union Pacific "believes quiet zones compromise the safety of railroad employees, customers, and the general public." The document goes on to further state that "...also is a potential cost burden to taxpayers. Public authorities are responsible for the cost..." So who is paying for the "world's largest quiet zone"?

The proposed route would cut our field in half behind our house... with the amount of dirt that would be required to cross Highway 34 and then cross over BNSF tracks, our field along with several others will be a giant borrow pit. We would be looking at a giant land bridge and the underbelly of trains. Elevated trains running at speeds of 70mph, hauling who knows what, derailing.....

Also, Mr. Patton makes a ludicrous comment about each farmer having their own access by paying for their own rail spur and purchasing their own rail car. Obviously he knows less about Agriculture than he does about railroads. Farmers sell their grain on contract. Those contracts must be delivered on or before the end of business day of the last day of the

month. If you do not deliver your contract on time, you are penalized. With who knows how many trains per day on these tracks, hauling who knows what where, how are we to know that our ONE rail car will be at its destination on time to meet the contract deadline? Another thing Mr. Patton is clueless about is that our local Co-Op does have rail access to BNSF, BUT hasn't used it in over 20+ years because it is cheaper to ship by truck down to the ADM barge terminal in Ottawa. The Rail terminal that we, by the way already have access to by I-39 in Mendota, IL, without having to pay for our own spur and cars, hasn't filled a train in over 6 months. Why? Because it is cheaper to HAUL the grain to the river terminals by TRUCK and ship by BARGES. And when the rail terminal is taking grain, they don't allow tractor and wagons, they want semi-trucks only. Tractor and wagons are the primary source of getting the grain out of the field and into the local Co-Ops in this area.

Another lie that Mr. Patton keeps telling people is that it will take trucks off the road... How? Trucks haul our grain from the bins to the rail terminal, to the river terminals, or to the local Co-Op. They haul freight from the railyard to the stores, manufacturing plants, etc. Not one recent manufacturing, industrial, or distribution center that has been built in this area in the last several years was built next to railroad tracks. They are built next to Highways or Interstates. He says it will bring manufacturing and industry to our area, really? There were two factories in Earlville, Plano Molding and Marathon, both located next to BNSF tracks. They left! They are no longer there and they were located right next to railroad tracks!

First Responders – articles state that very few “at grade crossings” are being planned. Ok, what happens to our first responders? They use township and county roads to get to emergencies. Now they will have to be rerouted or WAIT for a train. Possible 110 trains/day = a train that is 1-2 miles long travelling past our house every 12-15 minutes. How will First Responders get to emergencies within a reasonable amount of time?

The CREATE program is in process in the Chicago area. This program is government funded and is supported by the Class I Railroads. Union Pacific has already stated that they are not FOR the Great Lakes Basin Railroad. Norfolk Southern sent in a letter to the STB recently stating they will not be using this rail and have never even been approached by Mr. Patton. How many other Class I railroads are not in favor of this monstrosity?

An alternate route? Work to finish the CREATE Program's projects, upgrade existing lines to meet the supposed demand, revamp underutilized lines and find ways to make them productive.

Who exactly is funding this project that no Class I Railroads are publicly promoting? What happens if this thing is built and then abandoned? Who pays for the reclamation of the farm ground that would be brutally destroyed to create this monstrosity? Shouldn't Mr. Patton have Letters of Intent or signed Contracts from major railroad companies stating they would in fact use it? What kind of due diligence is being done to make sure this railroad would be used and that funds will be there to back up Mr. Patton's empty promises? What scientific studies have been done to PROVE this proposed railroad is actually needed and will in fact be used? Who is running background checks/OFAC on his Investors to make sure they are not tied to any terrorist groups?

I could go on and on, but I am exhausted. I have been exhausted since March 13<sup>th</sup> when I found out about this proposed railroad. The constant thought of what will happen? How will our lives be altered? The stress and worry of our goals and dreams disintegrating with every potential bulldozer of dirt moved. What will our legacy be that we hand down to our son? Sure as hell will NOT be the world's largest railroad project.

I ask that the Surface Transportation Board put a stop to this unnecessary, unwanted, unproven proposed project now. Absolutely nothing good will come of this proposed railroad to our communities and will be nothing more than a potential case of severe abuse of Eminent Domain for Private Gain.

Thank you.

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