

Essex Township Fire Protection District

May 26, 2016

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
DOCKET No.: FD 35952- Great Lakes Basin Transportation Corp, LLC Project
395 S. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky,

Honorable Daniel R. Elliott III, Chairman
United States Surface Transportation Board
DOCKET No.: FD 35952- Great Lakes Basin Transportation Corp, LLC Project
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Elliott:

The Essex Township Fire Protection District (District) Board of Trustees (Board), serving the Village of Essex, Illinois and the surrounding community, has concerns which should be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement for the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. project. The overriding concern of the Board involves the safety of the citizens of and those traveling through Essex Township as well as District First Responders and those First Responders providing aid to the District.

We have categorized our concerns according to the impact categories provided for scoping comments:

Safety

- With the stated objective of the proposed line, to avoid major population centers, we assume freight on the rail line and possibly the utility easement will include hazardous materials. An assessment of potential risks along with a mitigation strategy should be developed. It should include potential impacts on people, property and the environment should an incident occur.
- Development of the rail line and utility easement will add eight (8) At Grade Crossings and undetermined number of Private Road Crossings to our response

area. This creates safety risk for people, property and the environment. Risk of an environmentally damaging release may come from trains and the utility easements, but they may also come from farm equipment or vehicle traffic involved in the incident. An analysis is needed to determine the probability of each type of incident and corresponding emergency response necessary including the number of personnel by skill level and equipment needs to properly handle the incident. It should be noted that Kankakee County does not have a Level 1 Trauma Center.

- Due to increased risks noted in the first two points above, there will be a need for increased training of first responders (fire, EMS, law enforcement). This will require an analysis of the type and level of training necessary. It also needs to be determined how the training would be conducted: online? Locally held classes? Locally conducted hands-on/practical training? Further, who will bear the cost of training? If travel is required, who covers the cost of travel, room and board?
- Related to training, will our personnel be compensated for attending or successfully completing training? Our District is a volunteer department. Our responders are paid per call which is not much plus the training and work that needs to be done. All responders have other jobs, careers or are attending school. They give up their time to give back to the community and help their neighbor.
- We hope rail and/or utility related incidents will be low, but in the event of a significant incident (not including a potentially catastrophic event), neighboring departments in our county-wide MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System) and potentially regional resources will be called upon to assist. As such, an analysis will be required to determine the personnel, skill/training requirements for responding personnel, and equipment needs to properly handle likely incidents.
- Our District has no pressurized water supply (no fire hydrants). Our ability to fight a large fire or provide effective vapor disbursement is limited by water tender/tanker shuttle operations. Analysis is required to determine if additional equipment is necessary and to develop new mutual aid box cards to address potential rail/utility incidents.
- The rail/utility easement will cause disruption and delays to movement of emergency vehicles due to At Grade Road Crossings and potentially Private Road Crossings. This will include delays during normal operation as well as during construction and maintenance of the line, easement and all crossings. We will require information from GLBT regarding the frequency of trains, duration of crossing blockage during passage of a train or stopped on the tracks. How frequently can we expect trains to block crossings? How long will or can a train block a crossing?
- Based upon the information above, an analysis of response times is required for our District including:

- Arrival at an incident opposite the tracks from our station.
- Response time for personnel to report to the station may be compromised when reporting to the calls.
- Response times for each of our automatic and mutual aid fire protection districts/departments to determine potential impacts on their responses including times via normal and alternate routes.
- Ability to successfully conduct rural water supply operations. Our water supply is all on one side of the tracks therefore any incident requiring water on the opposite side of the track will impact water shuttle operation.

Unacceptable response times may force us to consider new mutual and automatic aid agreements, new station construction, apparatus and equipment procurement, or hiring of permanent Responders.

- Introduction of the rail line and utility easement in our District will increase call volume. How much of an increase can we expect during construction? During normal operations? Based upon the increase in call volume and potential disruption and delays outlined above, our District will need to determine if we have enough first responders to properly and safely respond to increased number of calls?
- Similarly, increased call volume will impact our County-wide Emergency Dispatch Center – KanCom. An analysis will be needed to determine if KanCom can handle the increased volume or if additional resources and/or equipment will be necessary.
- The proposed rail line and utility easement, as currently mapped, passes close to a Kankakee County emergency communication tower located on 3000 N approximately 9250W (approximate MP 83.20). Any accident involving this facility will cripple emergency response to the entire western portion of Kankakee County. Analysis is needed to ensure the integrity of our emergency communication system.
- According to GLBT “Point of Interchange” document filed with the STB, all At Grade Road Crossing are to be equipped with road flashers and gates and bells. We expect these and any other safety devices available are put in place to minimize incidents.
- It would be expected that rail and utilities be required to share information with local authorities, including first responders as to the nature of contents passing through their jurisdiction in general and specifically in the event of unusual or particularly hazardous materials.
- Need to ensure railroad and utility companies have in place a comprehensive emergency response team for immediate consultation and deployment.

Standards need to be set regarding the timely arrival of appropriate experts, resources and emergency equipment in the event of an incident.

- Also need to ensure the railroad has in place a comprehensive emergency response tool accessible by any smartphone, tablet or desktop PC with Internet access to provide first responders with exact contents of any rail car along with emergency response information and recommendations from protective action distances.
- Need for review of Federal and State Safety Agencies to ensure all safety related roles and responsibilities are in place to work with local safety agencies, including first responders during the planning, construction and on-going operation of the rail line, rail port and utility easement efforts. This would include:
 - Preparedness, response and recovery for all hazards
 - Coordination of planning and response with local officials including first responders as well as reimbursement of costs incurred to plan and response
 - Coordination, equipping, training and dispatching response assessment teams
 - Processes and resources in place to oversee and conduct initial response, recovery and cleanup
 - Processes in place to review, assess, bill, collect and distribute fees and fines from responsible parties to first responders in the event of poor preparedness, poor response, safety violation, accident, incident or release
 - Processes in place to reimburse first responders for costs incurred due to a safety violation, accident, incident or release
 - Periodic compliance reviews and audits of emergency plans and procedures

Water Resource

- As mentioned previously, our District has no pressurized water supply (no fire hydrants). Our source of water for firefighting operations is surface and ground water. If a rail or utility event were to compromise our water supply with potentially flammable chemicals we would be left with no firefighting capabilities.

Land Use

- Most of our Fire Protection District volunteer's jobs/careers are related to the agricultural industry. Will the loss of an estimated 16,000 acres from agricultural production cause a loss of farm jobs and loss of current and/or potential volunteers to our District?
- If all drainage issues are not properly addressed, new wet areas could make areas of our District inaccessible by heavy firefighting/rescue equipment. Unfortunately, this will not be known until after construction and periods of heavy rain.

Navigation

- In February 2014, existing County Road 20/N7000 Road West bridge (Warner Bridge) across the Kankakee River was closed for several weeks due to ice jams. A study should be conducted to determine if the addition of the railroad bridge would increase the likelihood of bridge closure impacting emergency vehicle traffic and increasing response time to our District and from our District to our mutual aid Departments/Districts.

Noise and vibration

- Numerous existing commercial and residential structures in our District are old, and not built to withstand vibrations caused by rail traffic. Many of the structures are built on limestone/sandstone foundations which will rapidly deteriorate and pose a risk of collapse. Need mitigation analysis to determine which buildings may be impacted to determine risks to our citizens.

Socioeconomics

- The influx of temporary construction workers may increase the demand for emergency services without an increase in revenues. An analysis should be performed to determine the nature and extent of the increase and possible solution to providing the needed emergency services.

Cumulative Impacts

- Tax implications- It is unclear if current railroads and switching facilities in Kankakee County provide tax revenue to the local community. Analysis of the impact on current taxes needs to be performed to determine the net effect of this project on tax revenue for Fire Protection Districts and other units of government including: County Government, School Districts, Townships, Township Roads, Drainage Districts, Parks, Libraries, etc.... Rail

lines and rail port will require additional services, particularly emergency services from Fire Protection Districts. How will these services be funded?

- What will be the impact on land values? Our annual budget is based on equalized assessment valuation (EAV) of property (property taxes). If this project results in declining EAV, our budget is reduced. Will the project result in a reduction in property values? If it does, how will the District make up for loss of revenue?

The safety of our citizens and our first responders is our top priority. We believe these should be addressed by Surface Transportation Board in a full Environmental Impact Statement.

Sincerely,

Andy Alt President.
Patrick O'Brien Treasurer
Bonnie Drarak Secretary
Austin Thompson Chief
Susan Young EMS COORD.
Jenny Meyer asst. Fire Chief

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