

March 9, 2017

Re: FD-35952

Mr. Blodgett,

We would like to address the New Preferred Route that was submitted by Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc (GLBT) on September 20, 2016.

We want to start with telling you a little bit about ourselves because it directly relates to how the proposed rail would affect our family.

The five acres of land that our home sits on was bought in 1997 with the hopes of building our dream home in the country when finances would allow it. We could build that home a few years ago and moved in June 2015. We live here with our 13-year-old son and plan to retire in this home. We love the land, the wildlife (fox, deer, turkeys, raccoon, and even the skunks) on our property.

The building of our home did not go smoothly at all, a lot of the problems were related to the fact that we are both deaf and communicate using sign language and the written word. We both work and get along fine in our daily lives but communication with the hearing and speaking world is not always easy or without problems. To both be severely hearing impaired adds a major challenge to our lives. To possibly having to start finding land and building a home all over again would be devastating for us.

We have been reading as much as we can about the proposed GLBT project and looked at maps of the proposed route on the [greatlakesbasinraileis](http://greatlakesbasinraileis.com) website. Much to our surprise and dismay our home on 1985 S Weldon Road, Winnebago IL does not exist on the maps provided by GLBT. We have attached a screen shot of the map provided by GLBT. The second screen shot of a different GIS website, clearly shows our home which is located just about 0.1 mile SE of mile marker 195 on the New Preferred Route.

We hope you can understand that life has not been the same for us since finding out that the proposed rail would literally wipe our new home from the map and take up our whole 5-acre property. The thought that we would have to start all over again has caused us enormous stress. It would for anybody in our situation but for us it adds an extra communication burden because we cannot hear or verbally communicate. We are very worried about our future.

We had hoped to pave our long driveway, fence in some of the property for our dogs, pour a cement walkway and build a shed this year but had to put these improvements on hold because of the proposed rail. Quite frankly we do not know what to do at this point.

Aside from the fact that we would be losing our home if this project were allowed to be build, we have other concerns as well.

We are concerned that there may be other families out there along the proposed rail, whose homes are not depicted on the maps that GLBT uses. We request that the environmental study finds all the homes that would be destroyed would this rail be built. We request that the environmental study takes this immense hardship into account when looking at alternative routes. It is our understanding that the proposed rail would go through a trailer park in Kankakee County, where would these people go? They likely have minimal resources to find new homes.

We are concerned about the oil pipe lines in Winnebago County, how are an increased amount of trains and the vibration they cause going to affect the integrity of those pipelines.

We are concerned about the disruption of the wildlife corridors that the new rail would cause. Winnebago County is home to migrating birds and bald eagles winter in our county. How would the proposed rail affect this. We request that the environmental study looks at this carefully.

We have abundant wetlands in Winnebago County, the water table in many areas is just below the surface. We build our house on the hill because it is too wet on the rest of our property. We are very concerned what a train spill will do to our waterways and streams.

We are concerned about the spraying of vegetation that the railroads do along their routes. A 200-foot wide Right Of Way (ROW) would require lots of herbicides. These poisons end up in our drinking water and the killing of all the vegetation impacts our flora and fauna negatively as well.

We read that only a single track would be constructed and question the need and legality for the excessive width of the ROW.

There are many school busses that travel on the country roads in Winnebago County and the additional at-grade crossings that this new rail would cause are a major safety concern of ours as well.

We are located next to a Canadian National rail so know first-hand how long some trains are and how long any emergency vehicle would have to wait at an at-grade crossing. Having more trains coming through our county only increases the possibility that the wait of an emergency vehicle at a crossing could have a detrimental outcome.

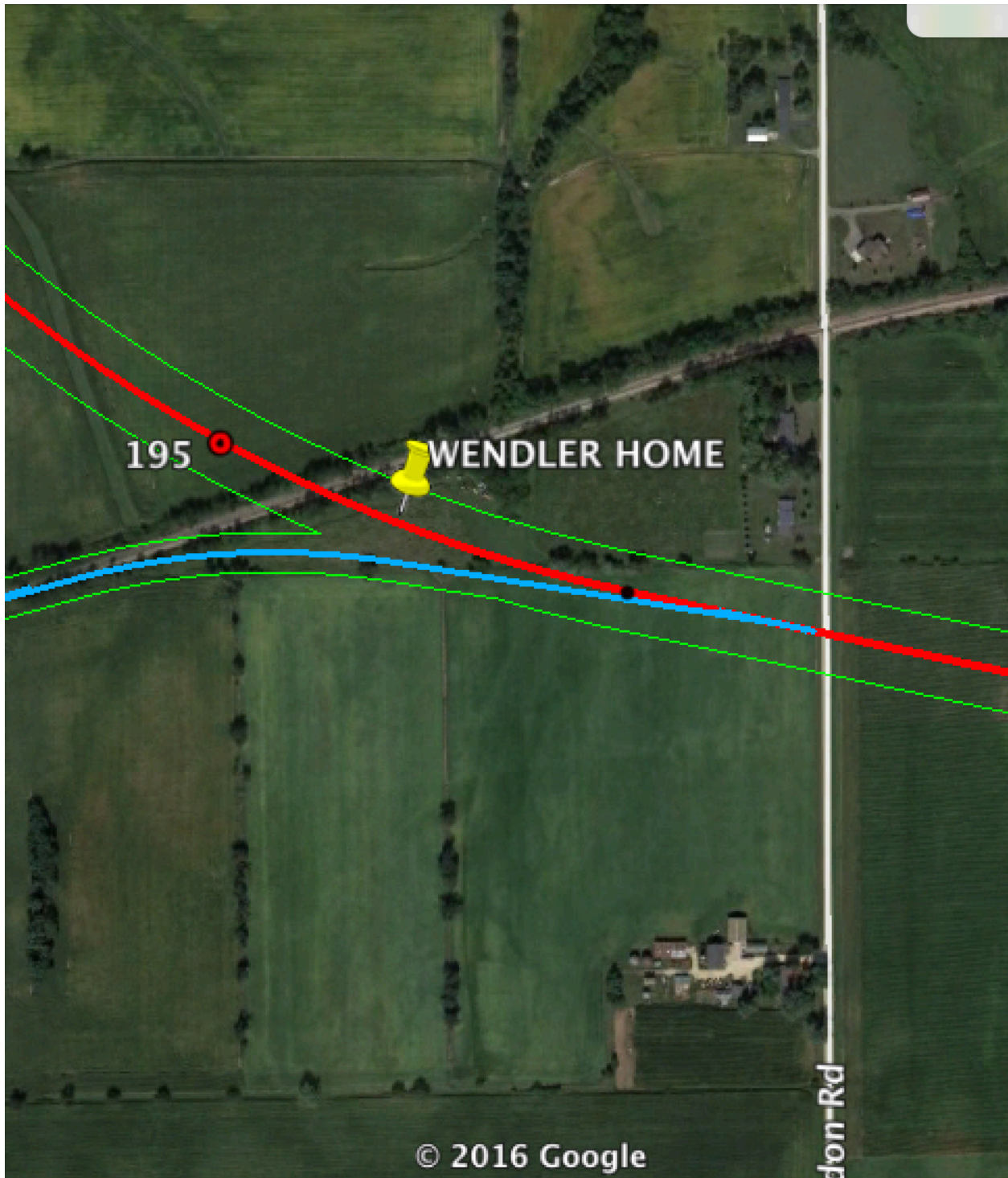
Lastly, the Surface Transportation Board has not had any scoping meetings for anyone newly affected by the New Preferred Route. We would request that a scoping meeting be held for us. We would also request that accommodations would be made in the form of a sign language interpreter at such a meeting so that both of us can participate.

After reading about the proposed rail and thinking about all the problems it would create we have concluded that there is no real need for it at all. We request that the Environmental Impact Statement recommends the No-Action or No-Build alternative only.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Bettina and Bill Wendler  
1985 S. Weldon Road  
Winnebago, IL





# GLBR New Preferred R...

