

4/20/2016

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**PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
FOR THE EIS
ON THE GREAT LAKES BASIN RAIL LINE**

Pursuant to notice, this matter came on for public meeting at Rochelle Township High School, 1401 Flagg Road, Rochelle, Illinois, on April 20, 2016 at approximately 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Mr. Dave Navecky, Surface Transportation Board,
Office of Environmental Analysis

Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball, Surface Transportation
Board, Office of Environmental Analysis

Mr. Alan Summerville, ICF International

1 (Public comments provided orally to
2 the reporter one-on-one.)

3 JASON SHEARER: My wife and I own and
4 operate a 3,000 head hog farm located on Mowers
5 Road in Esmond. The current proposed route of
6 the railroad runs within 300 feet of our house
7 and 200 feet of our hog barns. It crosses
8 Mowers Road and a drainage ditch exactly where
9 our floodplain and road ditches drain surface
10 water into the drainage ditch drain. This is an
11 area that receives millions of gallons of runoff
12 during spring thaw and heavy rains.

13 Currently, our house and barns are
14 unaffected but I have seen standing water within
15 30 feet of our house and less than 20 feet from
16 our hog barns. Any choking of the drainages
17 here could potentially flood house, barns and
18 deep pit manure storages under our barns. If
19 flooding is severe enough, it could overflow the
20 pits resulting in a mixture of manure and
21 surface waters which would first contaminate our
22 local ditch, then the Rock River and ultimately
23 the Mississippi. That in itself is a recipe for
24 an EPA nightmare.

1 My second point is animal welfare.
2 Hogs by nature run when they hear loud noises.
3 They perceive these to be some kind of threat.
4 The louder the noise, the more hogs run away.
5 Usually packing up against the opposite wall
6 until they settle down. This behavior can cause
7 lameness issues, and when really scared, they
8 have been known to crush pigs unfortunate enough
9 to be at the bottom of the pile. I generally
10 try to move through barns slowly to give them a
11 chance to see me and not be startled into
12 running. I believe trains running within close
13 proximity to our barns would aggravate this
14 behavior resulting in more lameness, lower rate
15 of gain and higher mortality rates. The
16 compounding of these issues may put us out of
17 business. I really can't see us moving and
18 rebuilding elsewhere. We don't have those kind
19 of funds. Thank you.

20 MR. NAVECKY: I'd like to make a quick
21 announcement on our evening's meeting and our
22 format. For the next half hour, we are going to
23 continue to maintain the open house format in
24 the cafeteria area where we have the maps and

1 the poster boards laid out for folks to look at
2 the proposed project. At 6:00 o'clock, we'll
3 then have a presentation about the project and
4 my Agency's role in the process, the Surface
5 Transportation Board, and that will last about a
6 half hour and then we'll go into the oral
7 comment portion of the meeting where we will
8 have folks come down and provide their oral
9 comments about their concerns related with the
10 proposed rail line.

11 So for the half hour in the open house.
12 If anybody is uncomfortable with public
13 speaking, we have a court reporter here that
14 will be free for the next half hour if anyone
15 wants to come down one at a time and speak with
16 her one on one for a few minutes to give your
17 comments so you're welcome to do that.

18 And also until 6:00 feel free to track
19 me down or anyone else with these nametags.
20 There are ten of us here this evening and I'd be
21 happy to answer any questions that you may have.
22 Thank you.

23 SHARON RANKEN: My name is Sharon
24 Ranken. I live at 5543 South Milford Road. I

1 live there with my husband. We have lived there
2 for almost 33 years. We have raised our
3 children there, a son and daughter and we have
4 our house and four acres and my son always
5 expressed a desire to never leaves his parents
6 pretty much so he took the adjacent two-acre
7 property that we had and he built a home there.

8 He has a wife and four children, and I
9 love having my grandchildren next to me. He
10 also has his business there. He owns a trucking
11 company. He employs four people and with this
12 happening, he has expressed a desire to move if
13 this happens and I am not a farmer but if this
14 happens, it bothers me immensely. I think I
15 could lose my son and his family to move into a
16 different area.

17 Also, I also have an illness. It's a
18 central nervous system problem and this railway
19 would be approximately 300 feet from my front
20 door and if this happens, I'm afraid it's going
21 to add to my illness. I have a horrible
22 sleeping issue, many other problems that this
23 could exacerbate. I just think this would be
24 detrimental to my health, and I just feel like

1 it's very bad for our area.

2 We live on a very busy road. Even
3 though it's a township road, it's extremely
4 busy. Most roads that are this busy would be a
5 county road.

6 There is a proposal of shutting off
7 several roads that are running along Mulford.
8 If this happens, the traffic would be
9 horrendous. There is a proposal that a set of
10 tracks would go across Mulford also, a proposal
11 that maybe a side road off of Mulford would be
12 closed and this would be a huge backup of
13 traffic.

14 Our road is used as a commuter road for
15 people commuting back and forth from Rochelle to
16 Rockford and the DeKalb area, and I just think
17 that if there were trains on that tracks, it
18 would back up traffic all the way to Highway 38
19 and also to Highway 64. It would be terrible
20 for the buses. As I said, I have four
21 grandchildren and three of them are in school
22 now, and I just think that if they close off a
23 lot of these county roads, it's not going to
24 have any access for the school buses in the

1 area, as well as first responders and fire
2 departments.

3 And the thought of having a railroad
4 across the road from me also in our area, they
5 would be starting to grade for the flyby to go
6 over Route 38 and that would leave the area
7 totally congested. We are also in an area where
8 we are situated on a hill, and there is huge
9 runoff problem with water in our area now, and I
10 think that would even make things much worse.

11 Like I said, I have lived there for
12 33 years and I planned on dying there, but I am
13 just afraid this would be just a terrible thing
14 for our area, and those are my concerns.

15 LANCE MILTON: My name is Lance Milton,
16 and I would like to know if an environmental
17 study like the one proposed has been done
18 elsewhere in the United States and in a similar
19 area close to what this area is like. Well, I
20 just want to know what the results of that study
21 was.

22
23
24

1 (End of comments provided to
2 reporter one-on-one. Beginning of
3 presentation and oral public
4 comments.)

5 MR. GRAVES: At this time, I'd like to
6 request that you turn your cell phones to
7 vibrate or off out of respect for the speakers
8 and the folks near you. There is quite a few
9 seats left here in the middle in this lower
10 section if you are looking for places to sit.
11 So good evening and thank you for joining us for
12 the Public Scoping Meeting for the Great Lakes
13 Basin Rail Environmental Impact Statement.

14 This evening's meeting includes two
15 sections. We'll first have a presentation and
16 then second we'll have statements or oral
17 comments from those who signed out at the
18 sign-in desk to make comments and if you didn't
19 sign up to make a comment but would like to make
20 a comment, at the conclusion of the folks who
21 signed in on the cards, I'll call for
22 essentially for volunteer for people who want to
23 speak and we'll just ask you to line up over
24 here.

1 So at this time, I'd like to introduce
2 and turn the meeting over to Mr. Dave Navecky of
3 the Surface Transportation Board, Office of
4 Environmental Analysis.

5 MR. NAVECKY: Hello. Good evening,
6 folks. Again, my name is Dave Navecky. I am
7 with the Surface Transportation Board in
8 Washington, DC and we are the hosts for this
9 evening's meeting, scoping meeting, for the
10 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed
11 rail line, the rail line that's being proposed
12 by the Great Lakes Basin folks. First slide,
13 please.

14 What I am going to cover this evening,
15 I'll go through a few introductions of the folks
16 up here on the stage, then I'll review, provide
17 an overview of who the Surface Transportation
18 Board is and what our environmental review
19 process is. Then we'll discuss the purpose and
20 need of the proposed project as well as go over
21 a description of what's been placed on the
22 table.

23 Then we are going to go over a couple
24 websites that I think will be important

1 resources for you as you learn more about this
2 project and participate in our environmental
3 review process. Next slide, please.

4 Okay. Again, I am Dave Navecky, and
5 our Office of Environmental Analysis at the
6 Surface Transportation Board. The Office of
7 Environmental Analysis is responsible for
8 assisting our agency in complying with federal
9 environmental statutes and on this project, I am
10 our agency's lead responsible for preparation of
11 the Environmental Impact Statement.

12 Also up on the stage is Phillis
13 Johnson-Ball. She is the Deputy Director of the
14 Office of Environmental Analysis and to her
15 left, to your right, is Alan Summerville. Alan
16 Summerville is with a consulting firm named ICF
17 International.

18 This is -- This is a large project as
19 you all know and it's going to be a very
20 extensive environmental review that's required
21 and we are a small agency. There is only 150
22 people in our agency, ten people in our
23 environmental office and we don't have the
24 capability to do all the work that's necessary

1 to appropriately address the environmental
2 issues related with this proposed rail line.

3 So in circumstances like this, we use a
4 consulting firm to assist us in that project.
5 In this case, it's ICF International and Alan
6 Summerville is ICF's project manager for the
7 project. Next slide, please.

8 Overview of the Surface Transportation
9 Board and EIS process. Sometimes folks may
10 refer to us as the Board or the STB. I will try
11 to stay with Surface Transportation Board. I
12 won't use too many acronyms. We are a small
13 federal agency, again located in Washington, DC.

14 Our jurisdiction is the economic
15 regulation of the freight and railroad industry.
16 In this case, whenever a railroad wants to
17 construct and operate a new rail line and enter
18 a new rail market, they need to get the
19 authority or license from our agency to do that.

20 When a railroad comes to us requesting
21 that authority, requesting authority to
22 construct and operate, our agency will
23 essentially conduct two reviews. One will be a
24 review of the transportation merits and that's

1 related to the purpose and need of the project
2 and that is done by others within my agency.
3 The other review is the environmental review,
4 and that's what we are here to discuss with you
5 folks this evening.

6 The Board will then eventually when
7 those two reviews are completed they will then
8 make a decision about the proposed project and
9 I'll get back to that in greater detail in just
10 a bit. Next slide, please.

11 The environmental review process starts
12 with a phase we call scoping. The intent of
13 scoping is for our agency to scope out the
14 content of the document. Scope out the issues,
15 identify the issues that we need to address and
16 evaluate in our Environmental Impact Statement.

17 To assist us in the scoping process, we
18 reach out to federal, state and local agencies
19 and we have sent them letters, we have been
20 discussing the proposed project with them. We
21 have been meeting with them and another very
22 important part of that scoping process is to get
23 your folks' input on what issues we should be
24 studying.

1 It's -- You know, as I mentioned, we're
2 from Washington, DC. You know, I am not
3 familiar with your area specifically. Every
4 project I work on has unique issues and it's
5 important for us to come out and talk with you
6 folks and hear from you and what issues we need
7 to study in EIS and we'll then take those issues
8 and evaluate them and present them in our
9 Environmental Impact Statement when it's
10 eventually issued.

11 During scoping, in addition to asking
12 for your assistance in identifying the issues we
13 should study, we also request assistance on what
14 alternative routes should be studied in the
15 Environmental Impact Statement. The
16 environmental regulations, federal and
17 environmental regulations, require us to review
18 a range of alternatives for a proposed project,
19 so the line that you see on the maps out in the
20 cafeteria area, that's the proposed route that
21 was developed by the Great Lakes Basin Group.
22 That's not our proposal, but we need to come up
23 with alternative routes to evaluating the EIS
24 and we will compare the impacts of those

1 alternatives to the impacts of the routes
2 proposed by the Great Lakes Basin folks.

3 So we're looking for suggestions from
4 you folks on potential alternative routes that
5 might minimize, avoid or otherwise alter the
6 impacts that might occur from the project and
7 then we'll study those alternatives within the
8 EIS.

9 We are also looking for during scoping
10 suggestions on potential mitigation if the
11 project were to move forward, would mitigation
12 assist in either avoiding or minimizing the
13 potential impacts that might be on this project.

14 We'll take all those suggestions that
15 we receive from you folks as well as from all
16 the federal, state and local agencies. We will
17 then identify a Final Scope of Study for the
18 EIS. We will also identify a range of
19 alternatives that will be studied in the EIS and
20 we will publish those or issue those in a
21 document we refer to as a Final Scope of Study.

22 And when that document is ready, we'll
23 notify you that it's out there, ready for you
24 folks to look at. If you have signed up to be

1 on our notification list whether by E-mail or
2 regular mail, as soon as that document is ready,
3 you'll be notified that it's up on their website
4 for you folks to see. Next slide, please.

5 So the final scope of study is done.
6 We have identified the alternatives we are going
7 to look at including the no action alternative,
8 and we'll jump into our environmental review
9 process.

10 We are going to need to collect a lot
11 of data. Some of that data will be existing
12 data. We'll need to collect some new data
13 perhaps using area photography. We may need to
14 go out and do some fieldwork to collect this
15 data that's not available to us and that's data
16 that we need to assist us in our analysis.

17 We'll also need to do some modeling and
18 the issues that we will address in the draft
19 EIS, I believe, are pretty comprehensive. I
20 mean, we'll be doing noise modeling. We will be
21 looking at impacts on land use, water quality,
22 on wetlands.

23 And this is our ninth meeting on
24 scoping over the past two weeks, and we are

1 getting a lot of good information from the folks
2 so far on issues we need to study and those will
3 be rolled into our EIS. We are getting input on
4 if the rail line were constructed, the impact
5 that's going to happen on the farming operations
6 because it's severing portions of an existing
7 field. We are getting input on the potential
8 impacts of the project on drainage tiles in some
9 of those fields. So that's the type of local
10 knowledge that we are getting during the scoping
11 process that we are looking for and we'll be
12 studying those impacts as well.

13 We will be looking at impacts on delays
14 for first responders whether they are police
15 departments, fire departments, emergency and
16 medical services because of either road closures
17 or there is a train crossing the tracks or
18 watching the tracks. We'll look at delays
19 related to school buses and school bus routes.

20 So we believe our study will be pretty
21 comprehensive after we have the material that
22 you believe we should be looking at to the list
23 of potential impacts that we typically study in
24 our EISs.

1 We also develop a list of preliminary
2 mitigation for the project based on what we have
3 come up with on potential impacts. And, again,
4 those will be mitigation measures that avoid or
5 minimize the impacts we have identified in our
6 study. We will pull all that information
7 together and we will issue a Draft Environmental
8 Impact Statement. It's going to be a lengthy
9 document. There is an -- it's a large project
10 covering three states and there are many issues
11 that we need to address. The soonest that
12 document is issued, the folks on our
13 notification list will, again, hear from us that
14 the document is available and we'll establish a
15 comment period for folks to review and comment
16 on that document. The same will apply to the
17 federal, state and local -- federal, state and
18 local agencies that are interested in the
19 project. They'll be provided with the same
20 comment and review period.

21 We'll also come back for a series of
22 public meetings like we are having this evening
23 to meet with you folks in person and we'll have
24 a formal oral comment period like we'll have

1 shortly where you can come up and comment on the
2 document, whatever that might be, the scale of
3 the impacts that were projected, the type of
4 mitigation that's being proposed, how the
5 alternatives are addressed, whatever -- whatever
6 you identify in the draft EIS that's of concern
7 to you. Next slide, please.

8 We will then take all of those comments
9 on the draft EIS and we need to respond to them
10 all in writing. We don't specifically address
11 each individual comment, each comment
12 individually. What we will do is we'll collect
13 comments of the same content together and we'll
14 direct you to a written response. Some of those
15 responses may just be clarifying an issue,
16 perhaps the wording in our document wasn't
17 written clear enough and we'll clarify that
18 issue for you.

19 It's going to be a long document and
20 you may have missed the information in the
21 document. Maybe it's in one of the appendices
22 and you just didn't get that far into the
23 document to find the information. So our
24 response will direct you to where in the

1 document that information is located.

2 And some of your comments might require
3 us to do more work. We might have to do some
4 additional analytical work, some additional
5 modeling and even maybe perhaps some additional
6 fieldwork in order to adequately address your
7 comment.

8 So once we have done all that work, we
9 will then issue a Final Environmental Impact
10 Statement and for a project of this size and the
11 issues we need to address, we are estimating
12 that it will take our office at least two or
13 three years to get to the point where we issue
14 the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. There
15 is a lot of work for us to do.

16 And I wanted to point out that the
17 Final Environmental Impact Statement will have
18 two sets of recommendations. Those
19 recommendations are coming from the office in
20 which I work, the Office of the Environmental
21 Analysis and the audience of those
22 recommendations is our Board, currently a three
23 member Board, so the recommendations are from us
24 to the three Board members.

1 And one recommendation is related to
2 alternatives. The recommendation will state if
3 you Board members choose to approve this
4 project, we recommend that you mandate that the
5 applicant construct the preferred alternative
6 that we have identified based on the potential
7 environmental impacts.

8 The other set of recommendations
9 pertains to the mitigation and in this project,
10 there is going to be a lengthy list of
11 mitigation measures, if I remember in the
12 hundreds, and the recommendation will be to the
13 Board if they choose to approve this project,
14 that they impose the entire list of
15 environmental mitigation measures on the
16 railroad.

17 Typically, in construction cases, if
18 the Board does choose to approve the project,
19 they do accept our recommendation on the
20 preferred alternative based on the potential
21 environmental impacts, and I just want to point
22 out that that alternative isn't necessarily the
23 applicant's alternative that you see on the map
24 out there. It could be one of the other

1 alternatives that we have studied in the EIS.
2 We have no way of knowing what that might be at
3 this point of course.

4 And the Board also typically accepts a
5 recommendation related to environmental
6 mitigation so that's another reason why it's
7 important for you folks to participate in that
8 aspect of the process and recommend a mitigation
9 because we get some good suggestions and if we
10 agree with you, we'll put it in our list of
11 recommended mitigation measures and, again, the
12 Board typically adopts those mitigation
13 measures.

14 So at that point, the environmental
15 review process is completed and the Board will
16 at that point be ready to issue a final
17 decision. At that time, also, the other folks
18 at our agency which are considering the
19 transportation merits of the project will have
20 completed their review, so the three Board
21 members will at that point have the information
22 they need on the transportation merits and on
23 the potential environmental impacts to make
24 their decision. They will consider that entire

1 record and they will either deny the project,
2 they will approve the project or they will
3 approve the project with mitigation.

4 After our agency makes the decision,
5 assuming -- this is going under the assumption
6 that the Board approves the project, if the
7 Board were to deny the project, there would be
8 likely no other federal agencies making a
9 decision, so if we deny it, why would they be
10 issuing, for example, the Corps of Engineers
11 issuing a flora impact, wetlands and stream
12 impacts; but if the Board approves the project,
13 there are a number of other federal agencies
14 that would need to issue a decision that would
15 include, as I mentioned, the Army Corps of
16 Engineers related to stream and wetland impacts
17 and the US Coast Guard will be issuing a
18 decision related to some major bridges located
19 over some large rivers and there is likely to be
20 some other federal agencies that need to make
21 decisions in this case as we proceed through the
22 process. Next slide, please.

23 Applicant's Purpose and Need and I want
24 to point out that we carefully labeled this as

1 Applicant's Purpose and Need. As I mentioned
2 before, we're -- the Surface Transportation
3 Board is a licensing agency. This project, the
4 proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line, is not our
5 idea. We didn't identify a need for this
6 project. We didn't determine what the purpose
7 of this project was. We are not providing any
8 funding for this project. The project is solely
9 that of the Great Lakes Basin Transportation
10 Group. So that's why we have it labeled
11 Applicant's Purpose and Need and so it's their
12 project. So what we have here is what they
13 provided to our agency at this point.

14 They have stated that the proposed
15 project would provide Class 1 railroads.
16 Class 1 railroads are the largest railroads in
17 the United States based on annual income
18 including, for example, Union Pacific and BNSF
19 Railway. The proposed project would provide
20 those Class 1 railroads and several regional
21 railroads with a bypass of the congested Chicago
22 rail network.

23 The Great Lakes Basin Group also notes
24 that the proposed project would net capacity to

1 the greater Chicago rail network to accommodate
2 existing and potential future growth and train
3 track. Next slide, please.

4 The Applicant's Proposed Action. This
5 is what they have provided to us and these
6 numbers, again, are based on the proposed rail
7 line that they provided the Surface
8 Transportation Board last month on March 7th.

9 Their rail line would run approximately
10 278 miles from southern Wisconsin down through
11 Illinois into northwestern Indiana. It would --
12 much of it would be double tracked but there
13 would be some sections where there would be
14 lighter traffic they anticipate and it would be
15 single tracked and there is some areas,
16 particularly in the City of Manteno, that would
17 be triple tracked because that's near a proposed
18 rail terminal where they would provide for
19 switching operations and also provide for
20 maintenance of locomotives and rail cars, both
21 their equipment and the equipment of their rail
22 customers. Next slide, please.

23 And this is just a map of the proposed
24 route. This is a current alignment proposed by

1 the Great Lakes Basin folks and, again, we'll be
2 identifying alternatives to this route as we go
3 into the Environmental Impact Statement process.
4 Next slide, please.

5 What I wanted to go over next are two
6 websites that I think will be useful to you that
7 will provide information to you about the --
8 about our process and also to enable you to
9 participate in our process. This first one is
10 our agency's regular website, our home page and
11 it's on through this website that you can file
12 your scoping comments with us electronically.
13 You'll be able to -- When you get to the
14 comments page, you'll be able to type in your
15 name and there will be a text box there. You
16 can type in your comments if you'd like to do
17 that or if you have a longer comment, I think
18 there is a character number on the text box so
19 typically people will attach a document to their
20 comment form and that's fairly easy to do. It
21 could be a Word document, a pdf document, it
22 could be a jpeg, if you want to show us a
23 picture of your property and how close it would
24 be to your buildings or your home, that type of

1 thing.

2 Also, on this website, we -- First, I
3 want to mention is we try to maintain -- our
4 agency tries to maintain a very transparent
5 process and any correspondence coming into our
6 office and all correspondence leaving our office
7 is posted on the website, and so all the
8 comments, scoping comments, we are getting from
9 you and your neighbors and agencies on this EIS
10 are going up on the website. Any communication
11 we have with the Great Lakes Basin Group is on
12 the website, whether it's something we send in
13 or something they sent us, so you can see what
14 information we are requesting of them as we go
15 through our EIS process and what information
16 they are providing us and that the communication
17 we post on there includes both letters and
18 E-mails. So if we receive letter E-mails from
19 you, then that also goes up on our website.

20 The applicant, the Great Lakes Basin
21 folks, also referred to at times as applicant,
22 has not yet filed formally for this authority to
23 construct and operate the rail line and the one
24 main reason for that is that the environmental

1 review process typically takes much longer to
2 conduct than it does the agency to review the
3 transportation merits, so we typically jump
4 start the environmental review process before
5 the merits side procedures.

6 But when the Great Lakes folks formally
7 file with us for that authority, that will also
8 go up on our website, so you folks will be able
9 to see that.

10 Then I wanted to clarify a
11 misconception that I'm hearing about that the
12 filing could be submitted to us using two
13 approaches. It could come in as an application
14 or a petition for exemption and basically the
15 difference between those two filing methods is
16 that the application contains more financial
17 information about the applicant but regardless
18 of which method they use, our environmental
19 review process remains the same.

20 The exemption -- the word exemption it
21 has nothing to do with our environmental review
22 process in this case. We are doing an EIS. If
23 they file a petition we are still doing an EIS.
24 It's going to take us two to three years to

1 complete. If they file for exemption, it's
2 still going to take us two to three years. So I
3 just wanted to clarify that the environmental
4 review remains the same regardless of what
5 method they use to file with us. Next slide,
6 please.

7 This is the second website. The first
8 website was www.stb.dot.gov and that appears on
9 the back of the brochure that we have available
10 up front. This website is a website that we
11 have prepared -- we, being Surface
12 Transportation Board, has prepared specifically
13 for our environmental review process. It's
14 greatlakesbasinraileis.com and that information
15 is also on the back of the brochure, and the
16 purpose of this website is to inform you about
17 our environmental review process, give you
18 information about the project and provide key
19 documents that make key documents more regularly
20 available to you. Our agency website can be a
21 little difficult to maneuver around at times and
22 this website is much simpler to navigate.

23 So on this project, on this website
24 we'll have some background on the environmental

1 review process, some descriptions about the
2 project, we have a page with a lot of maps. The
3 maps you saw out on the table, saw out in the
4 cafeteria those -- or all those maps are
5 available on that page. We also have a file
6 there that you can open up through Google Earth.
7 Google Earth is a free software program. Open
8 that up, click on the file and Google Earth
9 opens and the applicant's proposed rail line
10 shows up there and then you can zoom down and
11 look at your homes and your farms and look at
12 the proximity of their proposed route on your --
13 to your property.

14 I just will say we'll probably have
15 something similar when we get the alternatives
16 identified. Once we study the EIS, we'll have
17 maps of those of up there for you to take a look
18 at. You can also sign up to go on our mailing
19 list. If you have friends that weren't able to
20 attend this evening's meeting or any of our
21 other meetings, they can go on here and register
22 again on our mailing list either by E-mail or
23 regular mail.

24 If you have folks that don't have

1 computers at home, feel free to if they'd like
2 you to feel free to go on there and register for
3 them and so we can send them notifications by
4 regular US mail.

5 The last thing I wanted to mention is
6 that also for anyone that was not able to attend
7 this evening's meeting or any of our other
8 meetings, we are having an online meeting a week
9 from today, April 27th. You'll just be required
10 to sign up for that meeting. I think we have a
11 little over a hundred people signed up for that
12 online meeting and if you'd like to speak at
13 that meeting, we'd like you to note on the
14 register form that you'd like to speak as we
15 need to know who wants to speak so we can pass
16 the microphone in cyberspace from one person to
17 the next so we are not all speaking over each
18 other and so, again, you can find that
19 registration on this project website.

20 I think that's the last of the
21 description, so I urge you to go to either
22 website and look around and hopefully you'll
23 find that those are of use to you both in
24 getting information and also in participating in

1 our environment review process. Thank you.

2 MR. GRAVES: Thank you, Dave. Before
3 we get started, I'd like to ask a favor of folks
4 on the end of the rows to move into the center
5 so that your friends and neighbors who are lined
6 upped on the walls over here on both sides of
7 the auditorium can have a place to sit. I think
8 it will make it a lot of easier and comfortable
9 for folks.

10 The folks lined up on the wall, if you
11 want to come in and take a chair that will be
12 more comfortable. We have quite a number of
13 people who want to speak tonight. Thank you for
14 your cooperation. Your neighbors thank you as
15 well.

16 So we are going to begin the oral
17 comment portion of tonight's meeting and before
18 we begin, I'd like to provide some guidance on
19 how we are going to proceed and how to make the
20 process go as smoothly as possible. So first of
21 all, if you did sign up at the registration desk
22 and checked the box that you'd like to speak
23 tonight, I have all of the cards up here. I am
24 going to call people by name.

1 For those of you who may have missed
2 the box or who didn't sign up but want to speak,
3 when we are done with the folks who actually
4 signed up, I'll call for folks who want to make
5 a comment. If you like to do that, we'll have
6 you come up here.

7 You'll notice that have we have a court
8 reporter here tonight and her job is to
9 transcribe all of the comments that everyone
10 makes so we have an accurate record for the
11 public record and the information from the
12 meeting will be posted, as Dave said, on the
13 Surface Transportation Board website.

14 Because this is a public document, if
15 you don't want personal information appearing in
16 that document in terms of just any information
17 that's of a personal nature, don't put it in
18 your comments.

19 To help our court reporter, a couple of
20 tips so please speak slowly and clearly and also
21 if you could at least face partially towards her
22 so she can see your mouth moving and that helps
23 in the accuracy of the transcription. When you
24 come up to speak, we'd like to ask you to please

1 state your full name, your first name and your
2 last name and spell it out for both names.
3 That's also to ensure accuracy in the
4 transcription.

5 Each speaker will have three minutes to
6 make comments. You don't have to use all of the
7 time obviously but if you do, we have a helpful
8 reminder for when 30 seconds of your time is
9 remaining, there is a little yellow card sitting
10 in the front and a red card for when your time
11 is up. It's easy to forget where you are at.
12 Helpful reminders.

13 Because we have quite a few people who
14 want to speak tonight, we ask you to please be
15 respectful of your neighbors and people who want
16 to comment after you and adhere to the three
17 minute time allotment for your comments.

18 So what I'm going to do is I am going
19 to call three names to get started here and then
20 after the first person has spoken, I'll call the
21 next name and we got some chairs up here. You
22 can't see them from where you are. There is a
23 couple chairs up here for you to sit on and wait
24 your turn while the person who is speaking is

1 making their comments, and then I'll ask the
2 next person to come on up and we'll hand the
3 microphone off and we'll just kind of go that
4 way.

5 And then, finally, this portion of the
6 meeting time is you providing comments to the
7 panel here from the Surface Transportation Board
8 and it's not a question and answer period. If
9 you do have questions after the meeting, Dave
10 and Phillis and the ICF team will be available
11 after the meeting to answer additional
12 questions.

13 So with that, I'd like to call Nick
14 Bolan, Brian Dunkin, and John Hintzche.

15 NICK BOLIN: Good evening, everyone.
16 My name is Nick Bolin. I am a County Board
17 member, District 1. The members of the
18 representatives for District 1 have provided a
19 letter and I am going to read it this evening.

20 We believe that the Great Lakes Basin
21 Railroad project will have numerous ill effects
22 on the citizens of Ogle County and the district.
23 This project will cut through several family
24 farms and potentially close township roads.

1 Property values will decrease and hundreds of
2 acres of farmland will be lost. Ogle County has
3 some of the best soil for crop growing in the
4 entire world. Because of this, Ogle County
5 farms feed tens of thousands of people a year.

6 With this proposed railroad, Ogle
7 County will lose approximately 500 acres of
8 pristine farmland. 500 acres is the equivalent
9 to \$753,641 per year to the Ogle County farmer.

10 The addition of the rail line in
11 eastern Ogle County will have a negative impact
12 on the value of surrounding properties. The
13 simple truth is that they would pay less for
14 property next to a very busy rail line. When
15 property becomes less desired, it's assessed at
16 a lesser value, the tax burden would go up and
17 all other citizens in Ogle County -- for all --
18 for all citizens in Ogle County.

19 The township roads closed and over a
20 hundred trains going through the road that would
21 still -- that are still open, emergency response
22 will be delayed. The Ogle County sheriff's
23 office and the local fire departments will have
24 to make decisions to either go around or wait

1 for the train while an emergency situation
2 deteriorates. School buses full of kids will
3 have to take longer routes to get students to
4 and from school.

5 With respect, Nick Bolin, Rick Fritz
6 and Ted Golbitz. Thank you.

7 BRIAN DUNCAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
8 My name is Brian Duncan, and I am president of
9 the Ogle County Farm Bureau, and I am here this
10 evening representing that organization.

11 Our organization was started in 1917
12 and represents over 4600 member families in Ogle
13 County. Many of the people you see here tonight
14 are our members. Our organization has reviewed
15 the information released to date concerning the
16 Great Lakes Basin Railroad project and what has
17 become very clear is that there are way more
18 questions surrounding this project than answers.

19 Now I realize your task is not to
20 answer those questions but you need to
21 understand the depth and the gravity of the
22 questions and concerns in making your decision
23 to approve this project. The sheer magnitude
24 and scope of this project alone should warrant a

1 full review by the Surface Transportation Board.
2 Considering this project will traverse 280 miles
3 and would be the largest railroad project
4 proposed in 125 years, it certainly would lend
5 us to believe that the Surface Transportation
6 Board will complete its due diligence and
7 review.

8 Ogle County is a predominantly rural
9 county. Over 77 percent of our land base rests
10 in agricultural production and that industry
11 comprises over one quarter of the economic
12 output in Ogle County.

13 Of our 1148 farms, 153 are centennial
14 farms which means they have been held in the
15 same family for three or more generations. 18
16 of these centennial farms lie in eastern Ogle
17 County where the GLB Railroad is proposed. As
18 you can see, agriculture is not just a way of
19 life but our heritage.

20 Considering that by our calculations
21 over 1200 acres of Ogle County prime farmland
22 will be lost in this project, 64 farm parcels
23 will be severed and there will be six
24 uneconomical remnant parcels created and there

1 will be at least one landlocked farmstead, this
2 raises concerns over the impact to not only our
3 economy but our way of life and our heritage.

4 We want a full review of this project.
5 Concerns over public health and safety as well
6 exists. The proposed project in Ogle County
7 will intersect nine township roads, two county
8 highways, three state highways and two
9 interstates. These roadways are utilized by
10 over 800 rural residents daily, as well as five
11 school districts and four fire departments. The
12 potential for delays and travel on these roads
13 whether by residents, school buses or first
14 responder gives us great concern.

15 Great Lakes Basin has also included a
16 planned 50-foot corridor for possible future use
17 by utilities in its current plan. In fact, in
18 its key design objective No. 3 it says it will
19 provide a utility corridor for electricity,
20 water, natural gas, fiberoptic wireless coverage
21 both to support railroad operations and provide
22 new options for our neighbors.

23 Railroads don't need a utility corridor
24 to support their railroad operations, and the

1 Surface Transportation Board does not have the
2 authority to approve electric transmission
3 lines, natural gas pipelines, fiberoptics or
4 anything else Great Lakes Basin can come up with
5 that has nothing to do with the freight
6 railroad.

7 Great Lakes Basin says that this
8 50-foot utility corridor would be another source
9 of revenue. Well, I am sure it would be but we
10 believe that it is unconstitutional for a
11 private company to take our land for a railroad
12 and then turn around and sell it off to create
13 easements for uses that have nothing to do with
14 the railroad.

15 We request that the Surface
16 Transportation Board exclude any nonrailroad
17 uses from its consideration. There are also
18 environmental impacts if this project raises to
19 the surface and it will be negative.

20 Finally, we realize that railroad
21 congestion through the Chicagoland corridor is a
22 real problem. Then why didn't the Blue Ribbon
23 Panel propose this as an alternative? What we
24 want is a full review and an exemption if asked

1 for by the Great Lakes Basin Railroad from the
2 full review process should be denied.

3 JOHN HINTZCHE: My name is John
4 Hintzsche and Hintzsche is spelled
5 H-I-N-T-Z-S-C-H-E. I just want to talk a little
6 bit about the acres of land that are going to be
7 consumed by the rail line and what's going to be
8 taken out of production.

9 For each mile of track, we are going to
10 lose about -- we would lose 24 and a quarter
11 acres. That would be for a 200-foot
12 right-of-way. Through our county, we got
13 18 miles that covers three townships, six miles
14 each from southern Dement and to northern
15 Monroe. That constitutes about 436, 437 acres
16 of land. Plus additionally, we have to consider
17 land taken out of production for borrow pits,
18 berms, overpasses, interchanges, frontage roads,
19 approaches and crossings that could amount in my
20 estimation, and maybe I am estimating low,
21 another 500 acres.

22 So if 937 acres taken out of
23 production, let's put that into consideration
24 for what the farmer grows as corn and soybeans.

1 That's the livelihood most of us grow in eastern
2 Ogle County. Your 24 miles times \$2 or \$2 --
3 excuse me -- 230 bushels per acre figured, maybe
4 that's low for some farms, high for others,
5 about 55, 5600 bushels lost per mile at \$3.50 a
6 bushel, you are looking at \$19,500 lost per
7 mile. Over 18 miles we are looking at \$351,237
8 lost. That's just in one year.

9 If we are going to take total of
10 936 acres which we talked about with the berms
11 and all those kinds of things, that would be a
12 loss of \$215,300 or times \$3.50 again, \$753,000
13 almost \$754,000 of revenue lost per year not
14 just over the length of the time of the
15 railroad. So I got similar figures for soybeans
16 as well.

17 Some additional things to think about,
18 and I am sure these will be brought up, hundreds
19 of acres will be negatively affected as they
20 were mentioned earlier. Drainage tiles will be
21 cut and disabled, crushed, creating ponds and
22 wet holes, non-farmable, not productive ag
23 industry. Drainage ditches which are natural
24 and manmade will be rendered useless because of

1 elimination of outlets for water to get away.

2 I know in my community or my area,
3 there is -- the rail would slightly go right
4 down the center of a drainage ditch and it's a
5 manmade ditch that was put in to drain the soil
6 because it's some of the most productive soil we
7 have in Ogle County. It was farmed as a --
8 before it was farmed, it was a swamp and it was
9 very, very -- has been very productive since
10 then.

11 Farms will be subdivided into small
12 acreages and that's been mentioned earlier as
13 well, so landlocked and separated where farmers
14 have to travel great distances to get to them or
15 maybe they won't be able to get to them at all,
16 which increases their farming operations and the
17 time and the effort.

18 Pipelines may be crushed or have to be
19 removed or just the heavy weight of the rail
20 lines, and the soils and the soil associations
21 they will be directly impacted and the drainage
22 from those will ruin the soil again and again
23 impact our soils. So with that, that completes
24 my comments. Thank you.

1 PAMELA ERICKSON: Hi. My name is
2 Pamela Erickson. Pamela, P-A-M-E-L-A, Erickson,
3 E-R-I-C-K-S-O-N. I came here with my brother
4 tonight Harry Erickson and we came in protest of
5 the GLB Railroad proposal that runs through our
6 fourth and fifth generational farm and also
7 other cash rented farmland.

8 Farmers are an example of living the
9 American dream. My grandparents survived the
10 depression and worked and saved to buy the farm
11 we live on. My brother and I live and witnessed
12 the struggles to operate a farm. Generational
13 farmers are the backbone of America. We put
14 blood, sweat, tears and sweat equity into our
15 generational farms for decades. Did GLB
16 railroads stop to think of how this proposed
17 railroad destroys our farmland values and future
18 income?

19 Using eminent domain is unjust and
20 unfair business practices. The railroad will
21 make hundreds of millions if not billions of
22 dollars but they only want to pay the farmer a
23 fraction of the true value and loss to the
24 farmers and so many landlocked parcels like we

1 will have that cannot -- that can only be farmed
2 by crossing the railroad, not only does this
3 financially hurt the farmland owners, but also
4 the cash renters' income.

5 What about the farmers who cash rent
6 the land which the GLB Railroad runs through and
7 the farmers' lost income and lost opportunity
8 for future income. Farmers have been practicing
9 good environmental stewardship for centuries
10 before it became a movement. In 1978 radio
11 broadcaster Paul Harvey gave his famous speech
12 honoring the farmer. The Paul Harvey speech
13 should be read by all of those that are
14 reviewing this project, the investors and anyone
15 that has a decision process and to understand
16 the honorable farmer. I am going to read a
17 couple paragraphs quick, "And on the eighth day
18 God looked down on his planned paradise and
19 said, I need a caretaker, so God made a farmer.
20 God said, I need somebody willing to get up
21 before dawn, milk the cows, work all day in the
22 fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go
23 to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of
24 the school board, so God made a farmer.

1 Somebody who'd bale a family together with the
2 soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh
3 and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling
4 eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his
5 life 'doing what dad does' so God made a farmer.
6 By Paul Harvey."

7 Farmers, lets stand united in this
8 protest. God bless the farmer and God bless
9 America. Thank you.

10 RICHARD PORTER: I have an exhibit of
11 my client's property. Good evening. My name is
12 Richard Porter. I am an attorney representing
13 the Perks family who own and operate a 1300-acre
14 ranch and forest land along the border of Ogle
15 County and Winnebago County which Frank Patton
16 and the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line are now
17 proposing to bisect with a railroad.

18 We commend the Surface Transportation
19 Board for immediately recognizing an
20 Environmental Impact Statement must be performed
21 in relation to this project and urge it to
22 consider alternative routes to avoid the severe
23 impacts it will have on the Perks ranch and the
24 sensitive wildlife and habitat in the area.

1 The Perks ranch consists of forest
2 lands, wetlands, rolling hills, croplands and
3 grazing areas for cattle. The property was
4 purchased by the family over 50 years ago and
5 several generations have grown up farming,
6 ranching and recreating on the land. The family
7 has used the ranch to teach their children and
8 grandchildren the values of hard work and
9 perseverance and have opened up the land for
10 education and recreation to many friends,
11 neighbors, sports team and ranching groups like
12 Junior Hereford Association. The ranch includes
13 a large tract of hardwood forest that is part of
14 a larger complex of forest that has been
15 identified as a critical habitat for migratory
16 birds and other wildlife by the Illinois
17 Department of Natural Resources.

18 The larger forest complex includes two
19 Illinois nature preserves and two forest
20 preserves. If the route is not changed, then
21 the proposed rail line will destroy part of the
22 forest on the Perks property, fragment the
23 larger woodland and introduce invasive plants
24 and predators into the interior of the forest.

1 The woodlands in the area produce
2 whitetail deer which have been used to
3 repopulate the state and have unique plant and
4 tree varieties. The operation of the rail will
5 produce noise and vibration which will disrupt
6 the wildlife breeding and feeding patterns and
7 block wildlife movements. The scope of the EIS
8 should consider the impacts on the Perks forest
9 and the nearby preserves and include an analysis
10 of the alternatives to avoid these severe
11 environmental impacts.

12 The railway will also destroy the
13 livestock and agricultural operations of my
14 clients at the ranch by severing the land into
15 several inaccessible parcels. Additional
16 distances that will have to be traveled to the
17 several parcels and the cost incurred will
18 result in insufficient revenues to continue
19 operating the ranch or maintaining forest.

20 The Perks family proposes that at a
21 minimum an alternative route be used for the
22 western spur of the project to avoid the ranch
23 in the environmental sensitive areas. We also
24 request that Surface Transportation Board

1 require that a full and complete application be
2 filed by the railroad company and reject any
3 attempt to use an exemption process.

4 A Section 10502 exemption is only
5 supposed to be used when, quote, "the transition
6 or service is of limited scope." A 280-mile
7 rail line conversing three different states,
8 numerous wetlands, rivers, natural areas,
9 residential and agricultural land obviously is
10 not of limited scope and completely
11 inappropriate for exemption process. Thus the
12 Perks family will be filing a written EIS
13 scoping comment by June 15, 2016 which will
14 include proposed alternative routes for the
15 western spur of the project.

16 We respectfully request the Surface
17 Transportation Board include Perks ranch and its
18 proposed alternatives in the scope of its
19 Environmental Impact Statement. Thank you.

20 GLENN HANSEN: Good evening and thank
21 you for giving me this evening to speak to the
22 Board here. My name is Glenn Hansen.
23 G-L-E-N-N, H-A-N-S-E-N. I am born and raised in
24 Ogle County. I live in Section 34 of Lynnville

1 Township. I am also a township trustee for
2 Lynnville and I am -- farm -- my family has been
3 farming working with my kids into the fourth
4 generation farming and this affects me in
5 Section 34 and 37 which is mile marker 175 on
6 your map out there.

7 And first of all, where this proposed
8 rail line is, from 64 down to Gillis Road
9 everyone there will be completely landlocked.
10 The other part of that is we are in a floodplain
11 because we have the Kilbuck Creek and our creek
12 runs forth up to Rockford. This land that we
13 farm on in this area here was the old Rock
14 River -- Rock River basin you might say before
15 the glacier switched over to Oregon and when we
16 have drilled our wells and stuff there, we sit
17 on 49 feet of sand and gravel so one thing comes
18 to my mind right off the bat, if we have any
19 type of underground pipelines or anything, fuel,
20 water, whatever gets into it, fuel, natural gas,
21 whatever, goes down in there, how do you stop
22 it? We got to go down 49 feet to hit bedrock.

23 The other thing we have out there is on
24 our farm I just found this was an Indian ax

1 here, and in that box there we got several
2 hundred artifacts there, arrowheads, whatnot,
3 part of a hatchet. Through my area there there
4 is a lot of farm ground has the artifacts like
5 that.

6 One of the other things that about six
7 years ago we had our first eagle, bald eagle
8 that actually nested in the woods through in the
9 back of our farms there amongst with some other
10 and this year we have four, two of them are from
11 last year's offspring.

12 And the other part before I go, before
13 I run out of time, is as for being on the
14 trustee on our Board for Lynnville Township,
15 what comes to the discussion is the School
16 Boards or the fire fighting with the emergency
17 vehicles, whatever. We already have a lot of
18 our local roads are blocked off by the
19 Interstate 39 which is a mile and a half west of
20 us; and as a township, we don't have funds to be
21 building viaducts to be maintaining all of this
22 extra burden without huge tax increases on that,
23 and from that point, the other thing we have
24 always said, too, is we already got six miles

1 over from where I am at here we have a railroad
2 line that runs from the south of Stewart all the
3 way up to Rockford to the airport so as a Board
4 member trustee, we do not feel that it is a
5 needed rail line put through, that if it would
6 really be needed, I would think some of the
7 other rail lines would step up and just they
8 already got their easement, their lines, they
9 could just upgrade their rails and we wouldn't
10 need to take all this out of the community.
11 Thank you.

12 TIM BALL: I didn't know there are
13 still those kind of court reporter things.
14 Reminds me of my days back in court in the 80s.
15 I thought it was taken away. I don't know if I
16 am affected by this or not. My name is Tim
17 Ball, T-I-M B-A-L-L. I live in Hillcrest at 421
18 Wayne Road. I am a trustee for Hillcrest and I
19 basically don't know if this is going to affect
20 me or not, but I know it's going to affect my
21 neighbors and that's kind of the reason I ran
22 for trustee is because I wanted to care about my
23 neighbors and hopefully they care about me, too.

24 The thing that jumped out at me was

1 that who are the Great Lakes Basin folks because
2 Mitt Romney told us after the Citizens United
3 case passed that corporations are friends my
4 people or corporations are people, my friend.
5 Who are they? I mean, if they are going to be
6 taking up all of our land and destroying lots of
7 people's properties and farms, who are they?

8 We can't just have, you know, nebulous
9 theys doing these kind of things and I'd like to
10 know why that wasn't right front and center in
11 this paper that the Rand Corporation, that the
12 whatever corporations are the Great Lakes Basin
13 or the GLBT. That's what I like to know first
14 and foremost. That's my first question. Who
15 are they?

16 Are they American corporations or are
17 they foreign corporations? Are they just a
18 bunch of people? What's going on? So I think
19 that's really important for us to know. Who is
20 doing this do to us?

21 The second thing is what does an
22 exemption mean? Does an exemption mean we don't
23 get to know who they are because that's kind of
24 what it sounded like you were saying, that they

1 could apply for an exemption meaning that
2 somebody is going to do that to us but those
3 somebodys are companies of people. We should
4 know who they are.

5 I never liked that when my mom used to
6 do that. When I was being raised she'd say,
7 well, they say, Tim, that you -- I am like, mom,
8 who is they? She'd say me, so I did what mom
9 told me to do.

10 So that's what I am really asking
11 because the other thing is is when we were
12 discussing this in Hillcrest, the most bizarre
13 thing is there is a 30-mile swing east, 30-mile
14 swing west and that's kind of a funky thing to
15 think about is you are doing an EIS for I don't
16 really know what square miles and that's
17 frustrating.

18 So there is a few things I think we
19 should know. Who is doing this? What an
20 exemption is and where is it going to go? We
21 went out there and we saw a map that was all
22 drawn out by whoever they are and that could
23 change 30 miles that way, 30 miles this way and
24 so some of the concern -- my concerned neighbors

1 that live all around me all over this place so
2 they are going to be affected, sort of, maybe,
3 kind of. I don't see how that's something we
4 should agree to even off the bat.

5 Let's go into business and sort of
6 start a business kind of. It just doesn't work
7 that way so that's all I wanted to say was who
8 are they, what's exemption and when it is going
9 to be done? How do you do an EIS on something
10 that's really not set in stone? Thank you.

11 MOLLY JOHNSON: Hi. I am Molly
12 Johnson. M-O-L-L-Y, J-O-H-N-S-O-N. And I am
13 here to share a resolution on the proposed Great
14 Lake Basin Transportation Rail Line project
15 docket from the Dement Township Board of
16 Trustees. They have a resolution number here of
17 20160412.

18 Whereas, Great Lakes Basin
19 Transportation Incorporated proposes to build
20 the Great Lake Basins Railroad around the
21 Chicago metropolitan area for the purpose of
22 improving capacity, reliability, revenue,
23 safety, and the environment for expediting rail
24 shipments around the Chicago rail hub; whereas,

1 part of the proposed new railroad is proposed to
2 be built along the Mulford Road corridor through
3 Dement Township and whereas the proposed Great
4 Lake Basin Railroad, if constructed, would take
5 rich fertile farmland out of production, disrupt
6 irrigation drainage, close township roads
7 increase response time for emergency vehicles,
8 endanger wildlife and reduce the quality of life
9 for Dement Township residents due to increased
10 noise and pollution.

11 Now, therefore, be it resolved that
12 Dement Township Board of Trustees, No. 1, urges
13 that CREATE, the Chicago Regional -- excuse
14 me -- Chicago Region Environmental
15 Transportation and Efficiency program, a
16 partnership between the US Department of
17 Transportation, the State of Illinois, the City
18 of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak and the nation's
19 freight railroads be used to improve the rail
20 line efficiency and be used to find ways to
21 relieve rail freight traffic in the Chicago
22 metropolitan area. The township also urges that
23 already existing railway sources be used for the
24 purpose of improving rail line efficiency.

1 No. 2, urges the Surface Transportation
2 Board to deny the Great Lakes Basin
3 Transportation, Inc. the authority to construct
4 the Great Lakes Basin railroad through Dement
5 Township, Ogle County, Illinois.

6 And No. 3, urges the Surface
7 Transportation Board to protect the physical,
8 economic and social environments of Dement
9 Township, Ogle County, Illinois. This was
10 approved at the meeting Tuesday, April 12, 2016
11 and is signed by the Dement Township supervisor
12 Penelope C. Payton and Katherine J. Collins, the
13 Dement Town clerk. Penelope is P-E-N-E-L-O-P-E,
14 the initial C. P-A-Y-T-O-N. She is the township
15 supervisor. And Katherine, K-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E J.
16 Collins, C-O-L-L-I-N-S, the town clerk. Thank
17 you.

18 MIRIAH RANKEN: Miriah Ranken.
19 M-I-R-I-A-H, Ranken, R-A-N-K-E-N. I am Board
20 secretary of Creston Community Consolidated
21 School District 161. Creston School District
22 opposes the construction and operation of the
23 Great Lakes Basin Transportation Railroad.

24 On April 14th, Creston School

1 District's Board of Education unanimously passed
2 a resolution opposing this project for the
3 following reasons: Currently our district, like
4 many others, operate in an uncertain financial
5 environment. The lack of knowledge concerning
6 the financial impact this project would have on
7 property values within the school district
8 boundaries and on the property tax revenue our
9 district receives creates additional uncertainty
10 on an already uncertain financial environment.

11 The proposed railroad also creates
12 significant health and safety risk for our
13 students and school buses. Our students would
14 be forced to navigate around and through freight
15 train traffic most likely multiple times.
16 Furthermore, the proposed closure of local roads
17 and altered roads would negatively affect our
18 bus route resulting in much longer bus rides for
19 our students with added expense to the district.

20 With approximately 110 trains a day,
21 there is concern with noise disturbances and how
22 the proposed railroad could negatively impact
23 the classroom environment, our students, staff
24 and taxpayers as a train passes through. With

1 an approximate mean of 968 train accidents a
2 year, there is much concern of potential
3 chemical spills, freight train derailments and
4 the threat of groundwater contamination within
5 our district boundaries.

6 We also fear for our students, staff,
7 taxpayers and emergency personnel as they would
8 suffer from increased travel times while they
9 navigate around and through freight time
10 traffic. God forbid that there is an accident
11 with the bus, one of our families or someone
12 within our district and emergency personnel are
13 delayed while waiting for a train.

14 It is for these reasons that we oppose
15 the Great Lakes Basin Railroad and ask the
16 Surface Transportation Board to deny
17 authorization for the Great Lakes Basin
18 Transportation Company to construct and operate
19 a railroad to the territorial boundaries of our
20 school district. Thank you.

21 LAUREN HINTZSCHE: My name is Lauren
22 Hintzsche. My husband already spelled it. Do
23 you need me to spell it again?
24 H-I-N-T-Z-S-C-H-E. A lot of the speakers

1 already covered some of my points that I'd like
2 to bring up so I am not going to repeat those.
3 I think we get the idea but one thing that
4 hasn't been up is is there a truly need for this
5 project?

6 There is already a committee or group
7 that is working on this. The 4.4 billion CREATE
8 project is a public private partnership that is
9 already working on improving train congestion in
10 the Chicago area. If I am not mistaken, GLB
11 states that the reason for this is to reduce the
12 congestion in Chicago. Do we need two groups to
13 do this? The other thing is Class 1 railroads
14 are not committed to using it.

15 Union Pacific has publicly announced
16 that they are not interested. In fact, in an
17 article in the Chicago Tribune on March 21,
18 2016, Union Pacific said after carefully
19 reviewing the proposal, they are not interested.
20 They are going to focus on projects including
21 CREATE which would benefit the region and
22 enhance the efficiency for the Chicago area and
23 regional railroad. Do we really need this
24 project? That's something I really want you to

1 investigate and please do a full review and
2 investigate all of that. Thank you.

3 VICKI RIPPENTROP: Hello. I am Vicki
4 Rippentrop. V-I-C-K-I, R-I-P-P-E-N-T-R-O-P. I
5 am a teacher and I am concerned for the world we
6 will leave to the future generations. Northern
7 Illinois has irreplaceable prime farmland and
8 this natural resource must be protected.

9 Once land is taken out of agriculture
10 production, it will never again be available for
11 farming use. With this project, our nation will
12 become more dependent on unexpected, unsafe
13 imports for our food. Food costs will continue
14 to rise with continued declines in production.
15 Illinois ag business had a \$19 billion
16 economic impact in 2014. That is 19 billion
17 with a B. And the agricultural industry should
18 not be pushed aside for private gain by other
19 business interests. Please deny approval of the
20 Great Lakes Basin Rail Line project. Thank you.

21 JACK BERANEK: Hello. My name is Jack
22 Beranek. J-A-C-K, B-E-R-A-N-E-K. I live in Lee
23 County. We don't raise anything, we are too
24 small but I am here. I see the -- I see all the

1 farmers. I live on a farmette. I am not a
2 farmer. I grew up in Chicago. I am a veteran.
3 I fought for this country. I died 43 years ago
4 from Dow Chemicals poisoning me. I'm losing
5 pieces of my body as I go and I do not want a
6 railway 300 feet from my bedroom window carrying
7 toxic waste, that not only harm myself but can
8 harm everybody else here and the groundwater. I
9 am on sandy loam soil also. It would soak in.

10 What will happen? Will Great Lakes
11 Basin then just pull up stakes and let a super
12 fund take over? That means everyone in this
13 room will pay for it and they will be gone.
14 Now, their website says they are funded
15 \$8 million. They are ready to go. I got the
16 names of the top ten people of the company. I
17 don't know how you people cannot get them but
18 it's on the net. I just cannot take it.

19 I have PTSD. I am not going to live
20 300 feet away from something that sounds like
21 Operation Arc Light 120 times a day so my
22 nervous system can go crazy. I moved out there
23 to live my life in peace and quiet. Like I
24 said, 300 feet to my bedroom window and some

1 engineering wants to put a railroad there.

2 I oppose it and I will fight it if I
3 live long enough to do so. I thank you people
4 for listening to me talk. My voice is bad but
5 where does big business come off with the
6 eminent domain? From what I read, that's a
7 government process. We are protected by the 5th
8 and the 14th amendment against any private
9 company taking our property. I do have the ten
10 top names of the people of the Great Lakes Basin
11 and I will be picketing their nice homes in
12 their areas to let them know that I am not
13 happy.

14 So I am a very nice person. All I want
15 to do is for the rest of what I have remaining
16 with the parts of my body I have remaining
17 without the chance of a chemical spill, a
18 problem and polluting land to come and a company
19 as I will say, and I'll finish with that, that
20 will pull up stakes and I have seen it in the
21 City of Chicago and I could name the companies.
22 There will be a super fund cleaning it up and
23 that will be taxpayers' money and if there is \$8
24 billion allocated for this, who are all the

1 investors? They are a subsidiary of a different
2 company.

3 So I don't know what they are telling
4 everybody but you can find it all. I will make
5 a list and I will make it available to the
6 anybody who wants the names and phone numbers
7 which I am sure will soon be changed of all the
8 Great Lakes Basin Company. I thank you very
9 much but as I said in closing -- I thank you and
10 as I said, I fought for you in more than one
11 campaign. If you people don't fight back for
12 me, who is going to fight? Who is going to
13 fight for us? It is up to you guys. Not up to
14 big business. That's all I can say. Thank you.

15 TERESA PETRY: Teresa, T-E-R-E-S-A,
16 Petry, P-E-T-R-Y. I come before you today to
17 implore you to stop the Great Lakes Basin
18 Railroad. The lists of reasons are long but
19 today I want to focus on two of the reasons that
20 affect my family and every family in America.

21 Five generations of my family have
22 farmed the land in Ogle County. The three
23 remaining Petry families live within one mile of
24 each other on Mulford and Gillis Roads. The

1 proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad would affect
2 the farming operations and disrupt the protected
3 areas of our county. The farms in this area
4 produce the grains that help to feed America.

5 In America, today there is a food
6 shortage. The Feed America mission states that
7 one out of seven people in the United States
8 struggle with hunger. The Great Lakes Railroad
9 which is proposing a 287 mile track will
10 potentially take over close to 1,000 acres or
11 more of land in Ogle County alone, most of which
12 is farmland that produces the food to this great
13 nation.

14 To give you a closer look at how much
15 food we can destroy, let me put it in smaller
16 terms. The average corn produced per acre is
17 200 bushels, and the soybeans are 60 bushels per
18 acre, so in Ogle County you are losing 200,000
19 bushels of corn and 60,000 bushels of soybeans.
20 That is a lot of bushel baskets of food that
21 will not be produced to feed America.

22 And now think about how the number of
23 lost bushels increases in the other 10 counties
24 that are being affected by this railway. Now

1 how many Americans are not being fed? Is it
2 three out of seven, four out of seven?

3 My home sits on Gillis Road which is
4 adjacent to the Kilbuck Creek. The Kilbuck
5 Creek is a 28 mile long tributary to the
6 Kishwaukee River. It is the third largest
7 tributary of the Kishwaukee River. Along the
8 Kilbuck, there is 100 year old protected
9 floodplain. According to the Water Resource
10 Department in Springfield, Illinois, the Kilbuck
11 does not have any recorded elevations. When
12 speaking to the Water Resource Department about
13 the proposed railway, they indicated that a
14 railroad path that would come in contact with
15 the creek would require a massive investigation
16 that would have to cover up to a 10 mile radius
17 from the creek's location along its 28 mile flow
18 to determine that the potential flooding that
19 can occur when a floodplain is disturbed.

20 The Water Resource Department also
21 indicated that it would take many years and a
22 great number of State resources to determine if
23 this proposed railway would even be able to cut
24 through this protected area, and if disturbed,

1 could potentially flood the farmlands that
2 produce the food.

3 The decision making process that is
4 occurring will significantly impact the
5 protected areas, the farmers and the nation's
6 food supply for generations to come. Let's be
7 sure that the decision that is made is the right
8 one for America. Thank you.

9 ERIK PETRY: My name is Erik Petry.
10 E-R-I-K P-E-T-R-Y. I am here this afternoon
11 representing the Ogle-Lee Fire Protection
12 District. Our fire district is approximately
13 130 square miles surrounding the Rochelle area.
14 We have four stations. Creston, Stewart,
15 Hillcrest and Flagg Center. Our Board consists
16 of five elected trustees. Myself, Rick Cavar,
17 Lance Connell, Thad Hayes and Greg Morrison.
18 We, as a Board, have elected to oppose the Great
19 Lakes Basin Railroad and have adopted a
20 resolution to the fact.

21 The resolution is as follows: Whereas,
22 the Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District, Ogle-Lee
23 Counties, Illinois is opposed to the Great Lakes
24 Basin Railroad and utility corridor project for

1 the following reasons: A, the proposed
2 improvement will result in response time delay
3 of providing fire, ambulance and rescue services
4 within the District.

5 B, the many proposed crossings will
6 result in more accidents within the District.

7 C, the Great Lakes Basin Railroad, will result
8 in a transportation of more inherently dangerous
9 cargo through our District. The high speed rail
10 will result in more derailments within the
11 District. Now, therefore, it resolved that the
12 Board of Trustees of the Ogle-Lee Fire
13 Protection District, Ogle-Lee Counties, Illinois
14 is opposed to the Great Lakes Basin Rail and
15 utility corridor. All five trustees were
16 present at our meeting, all five trustees voted
17 yes to this resolution. Thank you very much.

18 DON KARPER: I am Don, D-O-N, Karper,
19 K-A-R-P-E-R. First of all, I don't hate
20 railroads, okay, but my first question would be
21 if this such a great idea, why hasn't one of the
22 other railroads that has far more assets that
23 this company done it? Because I would think
24 they would want to make the money that this

1 company is making.

2 Now, let give me you a little bit of
3 background. I am from a railroad family. My
4 grandfather worked for the Chicago Northwestern.
5 My father worked for the Chicago Northwestern
6 and because of that, I had the privilege to be
7 at two derailments when they happened and I got
8 to go to well over hundred derailments because
9 my dad got me in all of that and one of the
10 discussions that went on out there was what's
11 going to happen, what's not going to happen and
12 because of what's not going to happen, what's
13 the environmental impact?

14 Now, also, I was in the army for over
15 41 years of which I spent -- of which I spent
16 21 years on active duty. I worked at the
17 Pentagon. I got to see how the government
18 worked. I also worked with foreign governments
19 in dozens of railroad accidents over there and
20 one of the things that makes America great is we
21 have government agencies that are supposed to
22 oversee it. So here's the thing that I would
23 task you with:

24 Look at the worst case scenarios.

1 Don't look at what might happen. Look at the
2 worst case scenario because what we don't want
3 to have happen is what happened with the wetland
4 in Iraq when Saddam Hussein, let's clear them
5 out. We want to do this. That's why we are
6 America and we have government agencies and we
7 need to ask them to look very in-depth in what's
8 going to happen. All right.

9 Now, the other thing is there is a
10 thing called the golden hour. All right. Those
11 in the medical field know what that is. Make
12 sure you look at what the impact is going to be
13 because I know the difference between Vietnam is
14 we had what in the 50, 60 percent survival rate,
15 Desert Shield, Desert Storm, it went up into the
16 90s. In Iraq and Afghanistan because of the
17 golden hour and because of the situations and
18 the capabilities we have it's like 98,
19 99 percent, okay. You need to look at that.

20 So in closing, this is our government
21 standing there, they have a chance to look at
22 it, okay. Now, I really don't care if they
23 build the railroad there or not. I really
24 don't. As long as it's environmentally safe,

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1 that's what I am worried about because I don't
2 have kids but a lot of you do and I think you
3 need to worry about that. Thank you.

4 BOB JORNLIN: Hi. Good evening,
5 everybody. My name is Bob Jornlin. That's
6 J-O-R-N-L-I-N. I think I have heard all very
7 good reasons tonight as to why this thing should
8 not exist. One of the things I have done over
9 the last couple of weeks that was another thing
10 that bothers me is this thing was sprung on us
11 with no notice. Nobody knew about it until
12 about three weeks ago, but I have read every
13 newspaper article put on the computer and what I
14 have is a story about two guys.

15 They are in a gentlemen's club up in
16 Chicago drinking beer up there and I think they
17 heard about the project that was being done they
18 said you know what, I think we can make some
19 money. We will go to the Surface Transportation
20 Company and we will get permission to build a
21 railroad from about the Michigan line and
22 Indiana all the way halfway to the Capitol of
23 Wisconsin.

24 Now we won't make this line simple or

1 easy because -- or small because we want to
2 impress these people that this is a great
3 project. We are going to have a 200-foot
4 right-of-way. I live by the Burlington railroad
5 built in 1865. They run about 50 trains a day.
6 Their right-of-way is 90 feet. Just tonight I
7 measured the two tracks, the double track, takes
8 up 33 feet the two tracks. That's a foot on
9 each side so 200 feet is fairy tail. Excuse me.

10 The other thing I am going to do is I
11 am going to build a 15,000-acre repair facility
12 down there in Manteno. While I got a bigger
13 idea, he thinks he is going to have 9,000 people
14 to work down there. Of course first it's got to
15 be built. It will be built on farmland and I
16 guess he has never heard that railroads have
17 their own construction places. There is one out
18 of Rock Island I been to, Moline maybe, that
19 redoes engines from the ground up and they are
20 brand new when they come out of there. In fact,
21 they are better. They approve them. Railroads
22 come in with a broke down engine, they just go
23 away with a used one that's brand new.

24 So I don't think those guys know what

1 they are talking about but anyway over these
2 beers, they get to talking about this big
3 project and they have got to sell it so this
4 gets into the number of trains per day, 110.
5 Okay. That's a lot of trains. That's one every
6 15 minutes.

7 Well, they got to go 70 miles an hour.
8 They are going to be great big trains which will
9 I tell you I watched the Burlington for years,
10 you are lucky if they get up to 40 miles an hour
11 and a lot of times they are 10. There is no
12 70-mile an hour train except the San Fran Zephyr
13 and the Los Angeles Zephyr. And they don't
14 travel that fast either. Let's wrap up it. I
15 am apparently stuttering.

16 You got 15 percent of the trains out of
17 Chicago, they are going to do 110, it's going to
18 be 15 percent, we are looking at 600 trains that
19 are in Chicago every day. I have been in
20 Chicago, I don't see 600 trains. It would be a
21 mess in there. So that's pie in the sky. Okay.

22 They are going to pay us two or three
23 times the price of our land \$20,000. Well, I
24 got news for you, we'll get higher than \$20,000

1 down the road. And I hate to tell you they sell
2 by them the foot when you get closer to Chicago.

3 You are not making any more land. We
4 can't afford to lose any. You guys somewhere --
5 put a bypass around Rochelle here. I am going
6 to run a train to Rockford down to LaSalle-Peru.
7 We are going to do away with this congestion
8 here in Rochelle. I live here for 16 years. I
9 know about the trains that cross here. One has
10 to stop every other. That's not a bypass.
11 That's a railroad.

12 It shouldn't be over 30 miles out of
13 Chicago, and I don't want it wish this on
14 anybody that farms but it should be on Route 47
15 or somewhere in that area, and make it sound
16 better, put 50 feet of utilities in there
17 because we are going to put a fueling station up
18 here north of Route 30 six tracks so we can fill
19 out the railroad engines fast.

20 What they are doing, folks, is they are
21 giving you a sales pitch. That's what they are
22 doing -- and one guy comes from Texas and the
23 other guy is from Chicago and they just come up
24 with a big wild dream, and all they want to do

1 is make money. They don't care about anybody
2 else. They just want to make a fortune.

3 I don't think they are going to get the
4 railroads to go with them. I don't think they
5 are going to build 9 billion they are talking
6 about. That's impressive. That makes a guy sit
7 back in his desk. 9 billion. Think about the
8 interest on that money and who they are going to
9 get to stay 24 hours on a train. That's two
10 conductors, two engine, so...

11 The other thing they told you that
12 they'd take a thousand trucks off the highways,
13 a thousand trucks. You know, we are at 2
14 million trucks on the highways. A thousand
15 trucks ain't going to do nothing.

16 Secondly, they are going to haul our
17 grain. Where are they going to load? We have a
18 railroad train elevator on the Burlington up in
19 Delavan. It's broken because we can haul down
20 to the river and we get 2, 3 cents more up the
21 river. That's after we pay 9 and 10 cents for
22 the trucking.

23 They are going to give you free
24 electricity. I don't know how you are going to

1 get it out of the ground. They are going to
2 give it to you. Anyway, folks, if I had that
3 guy in my office, I'd open the back door and I'd
4 kicked him right out. Thank you.

5 MR. GRAVES: Just a request to please
6 limit your comments to three minutes out of
7 respect for your neighbors and there is more
8 than ample opportunity to provide comments
9 across the board here tonight so please limit
10 your comments to three minutes. Thank you.

11 ROGER HICKEY: I have already
12 bequeathed some of my time to my honorable first
13 appearing before me. Thank you. My name is
14 Roger Hickey. I live in -- my address is Davis
15 Junction, Illinois and we are somewhat
16 acquainted with the trains in Davis Junction.

17 I also have some farmland in total --
18 included in this proposition, and it would be
19 bisected on a diagonal the acreage would be
20 which anybody in the game knows what that does
21 in a farming operation.

22 Today's Wall Street Journal, I urge
23 everyone to get a copy or to go to the library
24 and read it because it has an article regarding

1 this very subject. Summation of which is
2 Project Not Needed. I support that a thousand
3 percent.

4 Update the existing railroads that we
5 have and I think we can probably serve our
6 people very well. Thank you very kindly.

7 (Brief interruption had.)

8 MR. GRAVES: We are going to continue
9 with oral comments.

10 JACK TOFARI: Thank you. I already
11 gave her my name. My name is Jack. I am from
12 Mount Morris. I promise I'll try to keep this
13 under 20 minutes. If you can't hear me, raise
14 your right hand. If you don't want to hear me,
15 go to sleep.

16 I am a railroad nut but that doesn't
17 mean I am going to go along with anything that's
18 calling itself a railroad. I have some thoughts
19 that I would like to air. Another man down here
20 his name was Jack. He and I are both Vietnam
21 Vets and we are both talking about the same
22 subject.

23 The people who want to start this
24 railroad, who are they? Who are the people

1 behind this thing? What is their background?
2 Do they know anything about railroads? If they
3 don't, who is going to run the railroad? I'd
4 like to know these things. We have Amtrak which
5 is millions of dollars in debt every year. We
6 don't need another one.

7 \$8 billion. Where is that money? Who
8 has it? Is it readily available or are they
9 going to need more financing from somewhere?
10 Why are the existing railroads not interested in
11 this kind of project? They are the ones who I
12 would think would benefit the most from
13 something that would shorten the amount of time
14 it would take things to go through Chicago.

15 The only railroad I know of that has
16 really expressed any difference is the Illinois
17 Central which is owned by the Canadian National.
18 They are the only railroad that actually goes
19 through Chicago. All the others go in and then
20 come back out. The Illinois Central bought the
21 Elgin, Joliet and Eastern so that they could
22 shorten their time by going around about
23 40 miles west which leads me to another
24 question, why does this railroad want to go 80

1 west of Chicago? That's about how far Rochelle
2 is and why not upgrade existing railroads with
3 overpasses instead of at-grade crossings?

4 These are some of my questions that I
5 would like to see answered. If they can give me
6 reasonable answers, I might be more disposed
7 towards backing something like this but right
8 now, I would like to see these questions
9 answered.

10 Oh, and those of you, you probably have
11 noticed this some people can be heard and some
12 people can't. I used to teach speech. Put the
13 microphone right next to your chin. Thank you.

14 SUE RADOVICH: Sue Radovich.
15 R-A-D-O-V-I-C-H. I am from Monroe Center,
16 Illinois and the proposed GLB project majorly
17 affects my farm. It servers my land in two.
18 The route enters and exits the northeast portion
19 of my farm, winds around behind my farm
20 buildings and horse pastures and enters/exits
21 the southwest portion traveling very close to my
22 buildings and my new house.

23 As far as I can tell, it's not much
24 more than a tenth of a mile from my house.

1 Extensive field tiling has been done where the
2 proposed route runs. Once the tile is cut or
3 crushed, I will likely have water issues in my
4 basement as well as the older farmhouse also on
5 my property.

6 In addition, excessive rain water will
7 not be able to flow naturally to the waterway
8 which is located on the opposite side of the
9 proposed track. Areas of farmland could be
10 rendered useless for ag production due to
11 increased flooding. Stagnant water will also be
12 a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

13 Northern Illinois has some of the most
14 productive farmland in the United States. The
15 amount of acres that will be destroyed not only
16 proves harmful to us landowners but also to the
17 public as well, as valuable ag production is
18 diminished. As you can imagine, our property
19 will plummet, and our way of life destroyed.

20 I also have serious concerns about the
21 safety issues of a high speed freight train
22 carrying toxic substances. I have seen
23 firsthand the tragic and disastrous effects from
24 a train derailment and explosion. For several

1 months I helped take care of a gentleman who was
2 brought to our hospital after he was severely
3 burned. He loss his wife in the tragedy and his
4 pregnant daughter lost her baby. I live ten
5 miles from the site of that derailment, and I
6 could see the huge fireball from my house.

7 My concerns are also for possible
8 contamination of my land and private well, not
9 to mention toxic gas release into the air if a
10 derailment occurs. I have several horses and
11 other animals on my farm. I am also very
12 concerned of the presence of the trains along
13 with the noise, vibration, air pollution would
14 adversely affect them and us.

15 The plan calls for our road to be
16 stubbed. The time for emergency vehicles to
17 reach my house would be extended. In
18 emergencies, time is precious. Farm machinery
19 will have to travel on busy roads and who knows
20 how much additional time that will take to get
21 from one side of my severed field to the other.

22 The GLB railroad project is not needed.
23 There are many underutilized and abandoned
24 railroad tracks in northern Illinois. Also

1 Chicago has the program CREATE which was which
2 was already addressed. Thank you for listening
3 to my concerns.

4 WILLIAM RADOVICH: William Radovich.
5 W-I-L-L-I-A-M, R-A-D-O-V-I-C-H. We all want
6 progress for the common good but this is not
7 progress and this is not good. This is a waste.
8 There is a viable alternative. Use the rail
9 that already exists.

10 As an example, instead of strapping and
11 straining the land again with more rail, there
12 already is a railroad, for instance, between
13 Rockford airport and the Rochelle interval
14 complex. In fact, rail exists parallel to the
15 proposed GLB route. Look at the railroad maps
16 in existence, not just the one that was given to
17 you in the handout.

18 No one can be convinced that the
19 Chicago backed up problems require another
20 railroad, one that CREATE proposal, C-R-E-A-T-E,
21 brought up before CREATE proposal a three --
22 sorry -- \$3 billion program of flyovers and
23 other engineering apparatus 20 of which have not
24 even been started. This project is designed to

1 alleviate the Chicago rail delays. Give it a
2 chance before starting this railroad.

3 I am a pilot. Here was another viable
4 futuristic alternative. The Surface
5 Transportation Board can advise the
6 administration to further expedite cargo by the
7 use of all transportational dimensions. What I
8 am suggesting is that the National Aeronauts
9 Administration and the Federal Aviation
10 Administration Research and Development Center
11 expedite their efforts to utilize mega lifters
12 which are airships like hybrid blimps or
13 dirigibles that can carry heavy load cargo
14 through the air, not in outer space but in inner
15 space, piloted air barges on the street flight
16 plan routes under air traffic control.

17 Again, German engineering is ahead of
18 us in this area but what a boost they could
19 receive from Frank Patton with his forward
20 vision and his \$8 billion. I hope that our
21 agencies and the Department of Transportation
22 are talking to each other.

23 Like Dr. Emmett Brown from Back to the
24 Future, Mr. Patton can say railroads, we don't

1 no railroads where we are going.

2 BOB WALSH: Hello. My name is Bob
3 Walsh. B-O-B, W-A-L-S-H. I had this written on
4 cards. I had it down to two minutes. I am
5 going to cut things out of it under the
6 circumstances. I hope it doesn't come sounding
7 too broken. I think that I will be cover some
8 things that haven't been mentioned.

9 One has to do with the Ogle County
10 Board and county government which has preserved
11 and protected the land very well.

12 Agricultural is a No. 1 priority for
13 Ogle County. I worry about, I know this has
14 been mentioned a little bit but not quite the
15 same way, I have a house right across the street
16 from a creek that -- or actually creeks that
17 will be cut by the railroad and on these creeks
18 every summer there are some Herons which are
19 long tall birds and they come one at a time, one
20 creek, one Heron, one baby and believe it or not
21 when I first heard about the railroad, my first
22 thought was about those Herons.

23 And also on the creeks there are new
24 rules, maybe you have heard of this, WOTUS,

1 W-O-T-U-S, Waters of the United States and in
2 the Environmental Protection Agency now
3 considers creeks to be the same as navigable
4 rivers and not only creeks but water that flows
5 during a heavy rain is now considered to be the
6 same as a navigable river which means that they
7 are very, very highly protected and I know there
8 are some farmers who don't like these rules.
9 They are very strict but in this case, I think
10 it will be very, very difficult for a railroad
11 to come through because they have to meet the
12 requirements of WOTUS, W-O-T-U-S. Maybe you
13 have heard of it.

14 Another thing is when it comes to
15 options for another line, instead of putting it
16 right through here, there is an abandoned line,
17 railroad, about 25 miles maybe west of here.
18 It's the old Illinois central railroad and it
19 was established in 1850, 1851. The United
20 States government gave literally millions of
21 acres to the Illinois Central Railroad to build
22 a railroad between Dixon and Galena to haul lead
23 and that railroad is now -- that part of the
24 railroad is the Illinois Central is now

1 abandoned but it still exists. The railway the
2 right-of-way and everything exists, so it might
3 be an option because it's already there.

4 Another thing has to do with the data,
5 there is a lot of statements that are being
6 made. I don't know if you accept these
7 statements without documentation and studies but
8 I would like to ask one more time where is the
9 data? And my last question is what happens when
10 this railroad is abandoned and that could
11 happen. It has happened.

12 I have -- Right where I live there is
13 an abandoned railroad, the Chicago Great Western
14 railroad and what happens when the train -- when
15 the -- when they leave, they take up the tracks
16 because they can sell those for scrap and they
17 pretty much leave everything else the way it was
18 so that is a problem.

19 I don't know how viable this railroad
20 is, but I think you have to think down the
21 road -- down the way. Maybe it won't always be
22 in business but it will always be there. Thank
23 you.

24 DERS ANDERSON: My name is Ders

1 Anderson. Anderson with an S-O-N. I'm one of
2 the Board members of the Kishwaukee River
3 Ecosystem Partnership so I am especially focused
4 on Kishwaukee River watershed. It's a very
5 large watershed. It's one of the richest
6 watersheds in Illinois, but the rail corridor as
7 designed goes through a number of very rich
8 watersheds. You can't beat it. It's one of the
9 best in Illinois. The Rock River watershed is
10 one of the best in the world in terms of
11 biodiversity.

12 This rail line in the entire length is
13 going to cross, we guesstimate, about 150 to 200
14 tributaries and main river stems, and it will
15 have an impact through we know derailments are
16 going to occur. They occurred already, probably
17 on a yearly basis if we read about them here in
18 papers in northern Illinois. We just had one in
19 Galena recently that was a bad one and because
20 there is a lot of sand and gravel in the soils
21 we have here, the impact on hydrology could
22 be -- it could be horrible, not just for human
23 life but for the biodiversity that's living in
24 this watershed as well.

1 Rail lines typically build berms. As
2 they cross creeks and rivers, that's going to
3 destroy the hydrology both for the existing tile
4 lines that are on farm property but also for the
5 existing wetlands that are adjoining the creeks
6 and rivers that we need to keep in place, not to
7 be mitigated elsewhere but to keep in place if
8 we are going to maintain the integrity and the
9 quality of the river and creek systems that we
10 have in place already.

11 Unless this rail system is bridging
12 every one of those creeks, building no berms, I
13 can't see how we can support it as currently
14 being proposed. The other thing I am especially
15 interested in, too, and I know the Kishwaukee
16 River assists and partnership is stream
17 restoration in the long run.

18 We have been involved with a number of
19 forest preserve districts, conservation
20 districts, land trusts, private property owners
21 that care about the creek and river habitats on
22 their property, and to do restoration is a
23 long-term process.

24 There has been a lot of protection

1 that's been done -- that's occurred already but
2 we want -- we would like the Surface
3 Transportation Board to look at the impact on a
4 whole creek and river system in terms of future
5 restoration and that this system is not built so
6 it won't preclude restoration in the future.

7 We really see the environmental
8 community working with the agricultural
9 community especially in terms of nutrient
10 management by restoring habitat in the stream.
11 We think that's going to be one of the more
12 reasonable approaches for the agricultural
13 community to avoid stricter nutrient management
14 requirements that are going to come out of the
15 line by working with the environmental community
16 to restore habitat in the stream.

17 So anything this rail corridor does
18 that would diminish the ability to do that in
19 the future, we won't want to see. So thank you
20 very much.

21 CURTIS FRUIT: Good evening. My name
22 is Curtis Fruit. C-U-R-T-I-S, F-R-U-I-T. I am
23 secretary of Lynn-Scott-Rock Fire Protection
24 District. I have a resolution here. Whereas,

1 the Lynn-Scott-Rock Fire Protection District,
2 Ogle County, Illinois is opposed to the Great
3 Lakes Basin Railroad and utility corridor
4 project for the following reasons:

5 One, is response time. As you seen
6 tonight, you see how long it takes people to get
7 here. Think about if it's one of your family
8 members that needs to have a response and you
9 add another 5, 10 or 15 minutes response time.
10 Put that in your heart when you are making your
11 decision.

12 Also, with closing of roads, that means
13 it's harder for us to get to people, get
14 anything around and adds to the time and adds to
15 our frustration. Also, the inherited dangerous
16 cargo going down these roads. Remember, our
17 district is all volunteers. We do this, we
18 train for this.

19 Who is going to train us for the extra
20 added dangers that we are putting ourselves into
21 every time there is a derailment of the train?
22 Derailment, our car, our engine fire or
23 whatever, that puts all our volunteers, all our
24 firemen in a lot more danger area than this

1 company has never seen or has no idea what's
2 going on.

3 The railroad companies have seen this
4 and for many years have helped us and have
5 trained us but as more come in, there is more
6 difference. The other is the high speed. You
7 put high speed rail in rural communities, you
8 can tell your five-year old a lot of times you
9 don't go there but they always got an interest.
10 Let's not let this happen in our neck of the
11 woods. That is the reason that we are opposed
12 to this resolution -- or opposed to this
13 railroad.

14 It's not helping the farmers. There is
15 railroad areas within six miles going the same
16 direction through Ogle County. Why don't we use
17 that?

18 No. 2, if you seen some of the
19 railroads been abandoned, once they abandoned
20 the land, it's no good for anything. Farmers
21 have tried to farm it, and it's almost
22 worthless. They put the seed in, it doesn't
23 grow, so let's consider what's going to happen
24 when they get rid of it. Thank you.

1 VALERIE YOUNG: I am Valerie Young.
2 V-A-L-E-R-I-E Y-O-U-N-G and pretty much we
3 covered all of my points that I had but I have
4 three small children at home and this is
5 virtually going to cut off our road through our
6 school district and so I am just stressing
7 school bus safety and, you know, it's going to
8 be within -- it's a little over a quarter mile
9 from our house and I don't want to have to yell
10 at my children, you know, get away from that
11 70-mile an hour train so I just want to stress
12 school bus safety. Thanks.

13 KIM WHALEN: Kim Whalen. K-I-M,
14 W-H-A-L-E-N. I am the past president of the
15 Village of Hillcrest which is one mile north of
16 here. You mentioned that you were not from
17 here. You are all from Washington. Just as the
18 gentleman here in the front, I was raised in
19 Chicago, 55 years ago. I have slowly migrated
20 my way west. I was in Naperville when it was
21 rural, I was in Warrenville when it was farm, I
22 was in the Eola, I was in many of the
23 communities, take 88 west. 30 years ago I
24 settled in Ogle County. What a beautiful

1 county, beautiful, rural, peaceful county.

2 Dirt doesn't come along. This is the
3 prime black dirt in Illinois and as I have seen,
4 Naperville, the farmland is gone, Warrenville,
5 the farmland is gone, eventually we are going to
6 be in Iowa and there is not going to be any
7 farmland left. You can't replace it. Please
8 consider that. There has to be a line somewhere
9 to divide -- to maintain and keep rural. This
10 is where I have raised my children and this is
11 where I hope they continue to stay. Thank you.

12 CINDY BROWN: Thank you. Cindy Brown.
13 An easy name. Thank you, ladies and gentleman,
14 for meeting with us. We really appreciate the
15 opportunity to have you here.

16 I live on Mulford Road right across
17 from where the railroad is going to be put in
18 and we raise really good show cattle and
19 breeding cattle and so our concern is for one,
20 vibration is will this affect fertility and
21 abortions within our herd; however, I also want
22 to mention that one of the things I do I am an
23 illustrator for the beef industry and I have the
24 endorsement of the Illinois Beef Association and

1 also of the National Cattlemen's & Beef
2 Association. One of the things I do is I do
3 work for Pack Auction is for the National
4 Cattlemen's & Beef Association and I have
5 enlisted the help of Colin Woodall in
6 Washington, DC who is the government affairs VP
7 so you may be hearing from him.

8 Anyway, I live in Lynnville Township
9 and I want to tell you a little bit about the
10 history of it. It's a very historical area. It
11 was settled -- the first settlers came in the
12 1830s. Prior to that, there were a number of
13 Indian settlements there and we can go out in
14 our fields and find all kinds of arrowheads and
15 spearheads and the gentleman earlier told you
16 about that.

17 Where we are at, there are groves of
18 trees and when the pioneers came in, they named
19 the grove of tree after the settler. The trees
20 behind my farm are known as Campbell's Grove.
21 Across the grove where the railroad is going to
22 be affecting it, there is a grove that has the
23 name of Potter's Grove. That was the pioneer
24 that settled that area, and apparently I was

1 reading in the history, there is also Pioneers
2 are buried -- although we will never know where
3 they are buried at but they are buried within
4 those groves.

5 So we have a lot of history here and
6 one in fact if you read the Lynnvile Township
7 history, a movie script couldn't write a better
8 story but I brought a visual aid for you because
9 I wanted to show you the area and Kilbuck Creek
10 is located behind my house. The pink area here
11 is a flood area. I have drawn the railroad in
12 here with the red line. This is Spring Creek
13 right here and then these are waterways right
14 here and this railroad is coming awful close to
15 those waterways.

16 Within those waterways and Spring Creek
17 it's a big area for great blue Herons to nest
18 and to breed in that area. So I am concerned
19 about that. Also, right in the field where the
20 train tracks are going to go through, I see in
21 the spring and the fall a lot of wild turkeys
22 and we have had to bring those back. We are
23 finally getting them back in our area.

24 You didn't see them very often, so, but

1 what I wanted to explain to you is you'll see
2 the floodplains and this floodplain we get these
3 100-year floods every other year. Anyone who
4 lives out there knows it. Anyway, this is
5 nothing compared to what it's really like there
6 and for you folks in offices and Army Corps of
7 Engineers and that, they are not going to
8 understand what it's really like out there.

9 Mowers Road which is right up here, if
10 the train track is built right there, Mowers
11 Road gets washed out a lot anyway and so this is
12 going to be one big waterway to rush through
13 Mowers Road.

14 Also, our big concern, this is very
15 flat terrain, our big concern is with the tiling
16 and the flooding that we will get from broken
17 tiles. I mean, I know my front yard is just
18 going to become a wetland because of that.

19 The other thing that I wanted to show
20 you is it was mentioned that there are a number
21 of eagles in the area and there are. We went
22 out to our cow pasture this morning and took a
23 picture of this eagle right here and the eagle's
24 nest.

1 So now last year in my area we had an
2 EF4 tornado, and I brought a picture of that.
3 This was taken -- pass this down for you. This
4 was taken by my son as we fled because we knew
5 that our basement wasn't going to survive. All
6 right. If the railroad had been built at that
7 time, it would have been hit by that tornado and
8 you can be sure that with 110 trains every 13,
9 15 minutes one of them very likely could have
10 been hit. Talk about a catastrophe which could
11 lead to a catastrophe with oil spillage and if
12 oil were to spill out there, it would go from
13 the waterways to Spring Creek to Kilbuck Creek
14 to Kishwaukee River to the Rock River so this is
15 a very fragile area.

16 Now, on top of that, if the roads had
17 all been shut as the railroad proposes, it would
18 have been a disaster for EMT people to get to
19 where they needed to go that night, so please
20 take that into consideration. The problem is
21 there is this big diverse idea between people
22 who live in the urban areas and people who live
23 in the rural countryside and, unfortunately,
24 there is not a respect for the farm life

1 anymore.

2 Working with the NCBA there are
3 thousands and thousands of acres that are being
4 taken every day from agriculture and I know so
5 many different breeders that are losing ranches
6 and having to deal with something like this and
7 now here I am having to deal with it.

8 So in leaving you this thought, I
9 really think somebody needs to do a
10 psychological analysis of Mr. Patton because I
11 have read a couple comments that he said and
12 it's like this guy is not right.

13 He made a statement that this will take
14 a million trucks off the road. How does he know
15 it's going to take a million trucks off the
16 road? Second of all trucks, don't take up
17 farmland. Right. Jobs lost, too. He might
18 think this but you wouldn't say it to the
19 reporter, he said, I want to leave a legacy to
20 my grandchildren and my children. Excuse me?
21 Is that like an ego or what.

22 You know what, what about the legacy
23 perhaps that he will leave instead will be
24 destroy communities, fractured farms and dreams

1 by all of us out there that will be cut short.
2 So we hope you take this into effect and thank
3 you.

4 RAYMOND RAINWATER: My name is Raymond
5 Rainwater, R-A-Y-M-O-N-D R-A-I-N-W-A-T-E-R. And
6 I have been born and raised here I have served
7 in the City of Rochelle on two stormwater
8 commissions. Presently I am the president of
9 the County River Drainage District and I am also
10 a State of Illinois Drainage District
11 Association member.

12 The whole project I'll try to explain
13 to you using this auditorium room. Say the
14 auditorium room was pick 8, 10 parcels of land,
15 pick a place where you want to put the railroad,
16 put it down here, put it in the middle, put it
17 in diagonal, doesn't make any difference. As
18 you can see, the auditorium slopes this way, so
19 if it's going to dump bottles of water up there,
20 the water would end up down here.

21 What the railroad is going to cause
22 which they have no idea what's under the ground
23 as far as drain tile existing in some locations,
24 I am going to estimate there might be 5,000 to

1 15,000 feet of ag drain tile affected every
2 fricking mile of railroad. And some of it the
3 drain tile may run for three to five mile
4 distance and if they are going to cut it off in
5 a very level flat spot, there is not enough
6 elevation, I am sure the engineer here would
7 agree with me, to be able to divert that water
8 to a place where it could cross the railroad
9 because needless to say, water does not run
10 uphill.

11 I have 45 years in drainage expertise
12 in residential, commercial, and agriculture and
13 what I see here in front of me really stinks for
14 ag and stormwater control in general. Just
15 something that a few other people have touched
16 on that I just made some notes about.

17 Just through Rochelle alone, the City
18 of Rochelle alone, there is 30,000 acres of
19 watershed. This railroad proposal project area
20 covers 15,000 square miles of that watershed
21 area, so if there is a problem, all the polluted
22 water goes through Rochelle. Wake up, Rochelle.

23 The utilities and the power they are
24 talking about and the pipelines running along

1 here and us lucky farmers or the lady with the
2 horse pastures and stuff like that, we can all
3 plug right in there and get free stuff. Who in
4 frick are we kidding here?

5 Look at the utility lines going across
6 for ComEd. Do you see anybody's house hooked up
7 to that? Do you see natural gas lines or
8 pipelines that is filling their car out in their
9 garage off of that pipeline? I don't think so.
10 And some of the guys touched -- people touched
11 on the eagles and the Herons and I have a
12 personal story.

13 We have cleaned 30 miles of drainage
14 ditch in my lifetime, four times we have dug out
15 turtles that we have had people estimate about a
16 previous problem, turtles were bigger than this
17 buried in the mud in hibernation. I am just
18 adding to the Heron and the ecological animal
19 thing and they are going to destroy these
20 watersheds environments of these ancient
21 animals.

22 The Surface Transportation Board has to
23 look below the surface for this project. The
24 gravity of the situation which we cannot see is

1 a huge problem that is under the ground and
2 that's why we can't see it and to date, nobody
3 has asked anybody for a surface -- below surface
4 drain maps and just on our farm alone,
5 200 acres, I will be done in a minute, 200
6 acres, we have 28,000 feet, linear feet, of
7 subsurface drain tile on one farm, and I will
8 guarantee the whole project they will not find
9 one farm they cross that doesn't have
10 underground drainage because it's been put in
11 around here for 150 years. Some of it is only
12 one year old, some of it's 150 years old. Most
13 all of it still works. If it quit working, they
14 replaced it. We are against it. Thank you.

15 SHERRILL MULLER: My name is Sherrill
16 Muller. It's spelled S-H-E-R-R-I-L-L. The last
17 name is Muller, M-U-L-L-E-R. And I didn't even
18 plan on being here tonight but I guess it was
19 meant to be. I looked on the online and the
20 company that was listed was listed as an LLC and
21 that company is a personal company. And these
22 are people that are in it for themselves, and I
23 don't know why they feel the audacity to propose
24 for the railroad to go through and affect so

1 many lives and we're not just talking about
2 here. Every single one of us here, however, if
3 that railroad is affecting our property value,
4 it is affecting our economy.

5 My home is what everybody else has put
6 their life work into, either a farm or a home.
7 For 50 years we have put money into our homes,
8 and you -- if you let the railroad affect the
9 value of your land or your home, property, it is
10 affecting the economy, we will have nothing. We
11 have worked 50 years for nothing and this for
12 the farmers goes back generations. This is only
13 Ogle County.

14 This only affects even this many
15 people. What gives them the right to affect all
16 the people from all of the states from Indiana
17 all the way through up into Wisconsin without a
18 thought? I am besieging this committee to
19 really be sure to check into all of this and
20 make sure that these people are not doing this
21 for their personal gain. This money is going to
22 go in their pockets. What do they need? They
23 got \$8 million together. How much more do they
24 need? We don't see -- We don't see that they

1 need that.

2 And the other thing I also wanted to
3 know was when you -- it's just a question as to
4 when you said that you would make
5 recommendations to them about changing the
6 plans, having another plan, and does that mean
7 that they have -- you are asking them to
8 consider it but you are not saying that they
9 have to follow it, and that is a really big
10 concern to me.

11 They don't have consideration for other
12 people already so if you are just asking for
13 their consideration, it really worries me that
14 they are not going to be considering the rest of
15 the thousands and maybe I don't know how many
16 people it affects but I am sure that it would be
17 more than 50,000 people that are being affected
18 by them putting this railroad line in.

19 And that is costing money to everyone
20 and all of the money lost that is being done,
21 are they really going to be able to -- is the --
22 is the area that the railroads are in, is it
23 going to be able to really generate the income
24 that they think that they are going to be able

1 to generate to ComEd or offset the losses, the
2 hundreds and thousands of losses dollars of
3 losses that are going to be -- that are going to
4 be made.

5 So I would really like to recommend
6 that we do not have this -- the railroad
7 especially when we have other entities that are
8 looking into it and there are other innovative
9 ways to get around having to have a railroad to
10 solve the congestion of Chicago.

11 JANIS DUNKLAU: Hello. My name is
12 Janis, J-A-N-I-S, Dunklau, D-U-N-K-L-A-U. Not
13 many of us are here from my area, Paw Paw, Lee
14 County, but there is some of us here. I just
15 want to say a little bit about Paw Paw and how
16 rural matters.

17 I am also not from a rural community,
18 but I had a dream and a love for farming because
19 of my grandmother and now I know why kind of it
20 has become my blood and a lot of times when
21 there are issues in populated areas, they feel
22 like they can just dump on us rural people like
23 we don't matter but we do and our land matters
24 to many.

1 My house was built in 1871. It's been
2 here for a long time. Paw Paw has the highest
3 elevation in our entire state. That is why we
4 have some of the windmills out in our area. We
5 also have a deep well that furnishes all of our
6 water which goes down over 900 feet. Those
7 would be an enormous concern, along with what
8 everyone else has talked about with the type of
9 soil we had and all the environmental concerns
10 that everyone has mentioned which are completely
11 valid.

12 One thing that comes to my mind is is
13 there any positiveness, positive effects at all
14 with this proposition? I can't nor have I heard
15 not even one but detrimental, oh, yes.

16 Another thing that comes to mind, when
17 you look at the map, it makes no sense. Why
18 would someone start something in a strange area
19 up in Wisconsin and then come down to make a
20 weird right turn instead of going on an angle or
21 in a straight line. Why avoid the big County of
22 DeKalb? I wonder. I am sure there must be some
23 reason to it.

24 So in conclusion, I feel that a private

1 company of dubious sorts, as has been mentioned,
2 how can it possibly enact eminent domain when
3 they can't have any eminent domain. I am hoping
4 that the Surface Transportation Board, you seem
5 to be very extensive and knowledgeable and very
6 diligent, do your job to the best of your
7 ability and get to the root and the bottom of
8 all of this and see if the need is even there
9 for this even existing. I doubt that as well.
10 Thank you.

11 JANE BAIRD: Hi. I am Jane Baird.
12 J-A-N-E B-A-I-R-D. For the element of time, I
13 am not going to be redundant and talk about the
14 tile and the upsetting of the water system. We
15 all know that very well. But I just want to
16 bring a couple of statistics to you folks.

17 The United States Department of
18 Transportation recently printed and published a
19 number of incidents that I printed off the other
20 day where there have been spills or derailments.
21 In 2015 there were 32 rail incidents with a
22 damage cost payout of over \$36 million. Who
23 pays for those damages is my question. And if a
24 derailment is of hazardous materials, it has now

1 poisoned the soil permanently, seeped into the
2 water table and the aquifer and now our
3 communities can no longer use their wells, their
4 personal water supply and personally, I don't
5 want Lynnvile or Paw Paw or Rochelle to become
6 another Flint, Michigan. That just scares me to
7 death.

8 Yesterday the Wall Street Journal
9 published an article that explained a little bit
10 about Frank Patton and I was interested to read
11 about him. It said he is the retired manager of
12 Portfolio Dynamics which is a financial services
13 software company. He became interested in
14 railroad -- and this is quoting from Wall Street
15 Journal Article, he became interested in
16 railroading while he was volunteering for a
17 Chicago civic and cultural group. Does this
18 make him qualified to run a railroad company? I
19 mean, I am a retired school teacher. I like
20 animals but does that make me qualified to be a
21 vet? I mean, it makes no sense whatsoever.

22 In conclusion, I have a great concern
23 also about a comment made by someone on the STB
24 panel at the Manteno meeting. The comment was

1 made and this was a quote, "GLB can use quick
2 take eminent domain if it is for the betterment
3 of the State of Illinois."

4 Now, in my opinion keeping our water
5 and our soil protected, that's what benefits the
6 State of Illinois more than -- like more than
7 lining the pockets of some secretive, wealthy
8 investors. At the same Manteno meeting this
9 individual asked who are the investors and the
10 response was you'll never find out. That is a
11 concern because I think we need to know who
12 these investors are. I urge you to please
13 reject this railroad proposal. It would be a
14 disaster for our communities. Thanks.

15 BYRON ED: Good evening. I am Byron Ed
16 and I am speaking on behalf of COBS Preservation
17 Partnership and we only found out about this two
18 days ago. I have a problem with that. It's the
19 largest development rail development in more
20 than a century and a quarter and it already got
21 proposed routes and we are just learning of
22 this.

23 I ask that the Surface Board consider
24 that. That this has not been a well-developed

1 plan at all. In fact, I say shame on the Great
2 Lakes Basin Rail Line, LLC because they haven't
3 done their public outreach. They haven't done
4 their town hall meetings. They have not
5 presented their record of railroad knowledge,
6 safety records, Environmental Impact Statements
7 and local meetings prior to the application.
8 Have they done any of that to your knowledge?

9 You are a private LLC. Who really are
10 you? And I, again, implore that they divulge
11 their ownerships and be open and transparent.
12 So far, it's been a project of secrecy now
13 becoming apparent. What town, county,
14 environmental agencies have they contacted? Are
15 you aware of any, the Board? Have you worked
16 with the soil and water conservation agencies
17 and funded -- and the company funded and LLC
18 funded their assistance. Have they done any of
19 that to your knowledge? You, the Great Lakes
20 Basin, is a private LLC, tend to use eminent
21 domain to enact their plan. They have little to
22 give to each region that they are traversing and
23 much to disturb. They haven't even disclosed
24 what types of materials will be transported,

1 have they?

2 I mean, I am asking the Board, have
3 they? You should be ashamed that they have come
4 before you and the public. They haven't shunned
5 from their input, they have not had impact
6 statements and they have been truly one sided.
7 The LLC if they ever had a massive emergency or,
8 you know, derailment they would of course then
9 declare bankruptcy and they would then leave the
10 people and landowners and so forth to clean up
11 the mess and the public to pay for it.

12 And in the event of any of those huge
13 disasters, they'd just start up another LLC and
14 buy the -- bankrupt Great Lakes Basin and they'd
15 start all over again. The LLC is really a
16 method to protect the individual owners. The
17 individual owners will work away with their
18 earned profits and the company will become
19 bankrupt.

20 I implore that the Surface
21 Transportation Board reject the Great Lake Basin
22 Rail Line proposal. They will take it for
23 themselves at with great problems for everyone
24 local. Take a look at the categories that you

1 have put down to be analyzed and every one of
2 those categories that you have put in that
3 brochure is actually a negative. You know, for
4 a transportation systems, safety, land use,
5 recreation, biological resources, water
6 resources, geology and soils, they are all
7 negatives. Save yourselves time and money which
8 they should be paying your time and money and
9 deny this proposal.

10 Look at existing rail lines and
11 coordinate some form of partnership among them.
12 Deny Great Lakes Basin proposal now. Give us
13 faith in our government. If you cancel this
14 proposal in two days, we'll be on Earth Day and
15 bring respect to the government. Thank you.

16 RICHARD DRENDEL: Richard Drendel,
17 farmer and Lynnvile Township Highway
18 Commission. When I first heard of the project,
19 I was concerned about what would be occurring to
20 the township roads and when I was reviewing the
21 construction narrative, I did discover a couple
22 items which was interesting. Gibson Road is
23 slated to have a flyover where Gillis Road has
24 an at-grade crossing.

1 Now a few years ago that was a -- there
2 was a problem with a bridge construction project
3 on state highway because of the bridge failure.
4 We took some traffic count surveys. While, all
5 those traffic counts on those roads will not be
6 indicative of the traffic day, the ratios are
7 very close. And Gillis Road would only have --
8 has Gillis Road at the at-grade crossing would
9 have four times the amount of traffic that
10 Gibson Road would have and I just fail to
11 understand why that would occur.

12 And, frankly, I was surprised that none
13 of the township roads were closed and it seems
14 to fly in the face of the closing of crossings
15 throughout the country basically. It's a well
16 known fact in agricultural magazines and
17 articles that railroad crossings are being
18 closed as much as possible due to liability
19 concerns and speaking with other township
20 highway commissioners that have railroad
21 crossings, railroad companies are pressing to
22 close as many crossings as possible. Now, it
23 just does not seem to make sense to me.

24 Another item is that Cindy showed the

1 floodplain up here and you have in front of you
2 but the area between Gibson Road and down
3 towards Mulford has two areas that are extremely
4 flat. The whole area right in there is flat but
5 there is two areas that are extremely flat they
6 are not shown up as a floodplain but they do
7 flood. They are -- It gets the large amount of
8 rain up around the Creston area, it comes down
9 over a period of time at a time, several hours
10 after there has been rain over Creston, we will
11 have flooding, and that railroad track does run
12 through that area.

13 Another concern is that there tends to
14 be a lot of fog in this area at times in the
15 flat area of the higher areas surrounding and
16 the fog gets rather dense and my concern is that
17 at-grade crossings with the dense fog that there
18 will be accidents at some of these
19 intersections. I have already lost one neighbor
20 a few years ago due to an intersection with 38
21 and 39. I'd hate to lose any more. Thank you
22 very much.

23 DAVID JOHNSON: Good evening. My name
24 is David Johnstown. I do want to thank you for

1 continuing the meeting under the extenuating
2 circumstances that we had. So thank you for
3 doing that. I work for a leading production or
4 a leading agricultural company that in some
5 circles might be a little less popular than the
6 GLB. I won't name that name but anyway, I am
7 also a small -- I have a small livestock
8 operation and I have been a lifelong resident of
9 this area for, well, lifelong, but I live about
10 less than a mile from where the proposed route
11 is going to go and but I'd like to maybe comment
12 on a few topics.

13 First, you know, how is it going to
14 affect my home, my livelihood and the neighbors
15 around me who have similar circumstance. I'd
16 like to talk a little about the environment and
17 you know, the third is how are we going to feed
18 a growing population in this world? As a
19 resident of Dement Township where I live, I also
20 raise a small herd of cattle there.

21 My extended family is also involved in
22 this operation, and I fear that this newly
23 created route will have the presence of
24 excessive train traffic that could effect the

1 fertility rates, the performance and the general
2 health of our -- and well-being of our herd, and
3 I think that's something that all livestock
4 producers that would be in this -- into the
5 vicinity of this proposed rail would have to
6 deal with.

7 You know, you are talking 278 miles as
8 I think is what the distance is and, you know,
9 all along that route there is going to be
10 livestock producers that are going to have to
11 deal with issues with the trains. Like I said,
12 my whole extended family is involved in our
13 operation.

14 It's going to affect the travel between
15 our farms and during our calving season, it
16 could be detrimental to the success of our
17 operation because we often have to go from farm
18 to farm to help with the birthing process. In
19 addition to that, I also have safety for my --
20 or concerns for the safety of my family, my
21 neighbors. You know, we are going to have to
22 cross those rails multiple times or worse yet we
23 are going to drive great distances to go around
24 because of road crossings like Rick just was

1 mentioning.

2 Second thing I was going to mention is
3 that, you know, there has been a lot of talk
4 about the environmental issues. You know, a lot
5 of talk about drainage. I got 30 seconds, so
6 the eagles. I see the eagles. I think if there
7 is a train, a train that's going to be proposed
8 to go through this route, do you think the
9 eagles are going to continue to nest in this
10 area? That train route is less than a mile in
11 some cases I think by Teresa's house it's just a
12 few hundreds yards from where the nests are
13 going to be. Are they going to continue to nest
14 in that area? Probably not.

15 I have seen a lot of wildlife species
16 that have come back to my to this area in my
17 lifetime such as the eagle, such as wild turkey,
18 the coyotes and such. So, you know, that train
19 is going to have an affect on that wildlife.

20 And then lastly, this proposed Great
21 Lakes Basin Railroad will remove permanently
22 approximately 7,000 acres of agricultural land
23 in some of the most productive ground in the
24 world. Corn yields in this area are about 180

1 bushels per acre. Some of you guys talked about
2 a higher count, which means we'll remove
3 approximately 1.25 million bushels of corn,
4 that's if it was all in corn, out of the world
5 market.

6 In 2011, the world population reached
7 over 7 billion people. At the current birth
8 rate, experts predict that we'll reach more than
9 9 billion people by 2050. To feed everyone, we
10 will need to double the amount of food that we
11 are currently producing.

12 As someone who is in the business of
13 trying to improve and increase production in
14 agricultural, we do not need to worsen the issue
15 by needlessly taking ground out of production
16 that could be otherwise used to feed the world
17 and I have been into countries -- a number of
18 other countries in the world for my company, and
19 I will tell you that Illinois has some of the
20 richest farm ground in the world. Thank you.

21 MR. GRAVES: A couple quick comments
22 before we move on here. First, for those of you
23 wondering about the gentleman who had the
24 cardiac issue here that we had a little bit ago,

1 the word is that he is at the hospital and he is
2 holding his own so we are thankful for that.

3 And second, we have two more speakers
4 up here who have filled out cards. If anybody
5 did not put the I want to speak check mark on
6 your card but would like to come up and speak,
7 come up and over here and we'll get you in the
8 cue.

9 JOHN GILL: My name is John Gill.
10 J-O-H-N, G-I-L-L. I'd like to say if people
11 remember the crash they had over there in
12 Mulford Road and Sandy Hollow Union National
13 Railroad, anybody remember how long ago that
14 was, two years ago, three years ago, somebody
15 got killed there, they tried to reach in the
16 railroad telling them, hey, you got a washed out
17 track, for an hour or two hours trying to call
18 them up say your track is washed out but they --
19 the connection wasn't made and they crashed
20 there with the ethanol and people got killed and
21 it just -- just to settle that one case from
22 what I heard was \$40 million and Chicago already
23 has rings of railroads around that Chicago area.
24 They got the loop. If they feel that it's so

1 safe over there, they can run their L trains and
2 then run a freight train, get it timed out.

3 Plus they got other railroads around
4 Chicago, a belt line railroad that runs about
5 five, six miles west of downtown Chicago along
6 Cicero Avenue and they have another railroad
7 that's 30, 35 miles out from downtown Chicago,
8 the Elgin, Joliet, Indiana railroad. That's
9 supposed to alleviate the running into Chicago.
10 Why ain't they using that? If they are not
11 using it, why ain't they using it?

12 So I don't see why they have to come
13 like people said 70, 80 miles out here west of
14 Chicago. If they are going to be building
15 another bypass railroad there, it should be
16 closer to Chicago like along Route 47 where they
17 probably need another interstate and coordinate
18 that with a new interstate highway.

19 And they can take \$8 billion that they
20 want to invest it over here in this railroad and
21 invest it in feeding and homing the hungry and
22 the homeless, veterans, too. Okay. That's
23 about all I got.

24 ANDREW REYNOLDS: My name is Andrew

1 Reynolds. A-N-D-R-E-W R-E-Y-N-O-L-D-S. I lived
2 in the Rochelle area for 50 years now and you
3 guys don't know it but Rochelle probably gets
4 more trains in a day than any of you would want
5 to even think about so you don't live around
6 here and hate trains. You learn to understand
7 that they do stuff that's good.

8 I am not going to bore you with
9 repeating everything that everyone has told you
10 about how there are projects to take and carry
11 this thing, traffic that this new trail line
12 wants to carry through here that could go on
13 existing lines or improved lines in the Chicago
14 area. What I'd like to get at and what I'd
15 hoped that the Board would consider is the
16 eminent domain aspect of this project.

17 There are a number of ways that an
18 entity can get property in America for any sort
19 of project that they want to build and the last
20 resort is always eminent domain because it isn't
21 a blunt instrument. It's two muscular thugs in
22 well tailored suits showing up at your doorstep
23 and telling you that how happy they are that you
24 decided to take their offer because you don't

1 have a choice. They say you are going to -- we
2 are going to buy your property and if you don't
3 like it, tough.

4 Why does this company need the power to
5 seize people's property against their will? Why
6 does it need to be able to take and go to that
7 final last arbiter? A city, a state, the
8 federal government, if they want to build an
9 airport or a railroad, eminent domain is
10 understandable, because when they are done, the
11 project that they will have completed will be
12 something that all the people benefit from.

13 What is the benefit for me, for this
14 community, for the farmers, from anyone when
15 Great Lakes Railroad takes property away and
16 builds their line? I cannot see any benefit in
17 it. If you can see any benefit in it, if you
18 can explain to me and everyone else here why
19 giving them the ability to take people's
20 property is going to be an improvement for them,
21 I hope you will because I can't see it, and I
22 hope because of that, you will deny this
23 project. I hope you will see that giving a
24 company the right to take people's property

1 simply so that it can make money is
2 fundamentally wrong. Thank you.

3 RICHARD EGGERS: Richard Eggers. I
4 hope, Paula, you can hear me. I apologize for
5 my voice. This morning because of a ten-day old
6 cold I ended up losing my voice and my family
7 and my friends. There is something you have to
8 understand here tonight, I have a statement and
9 then I have a question. There is a lot of
10 emotion and a lot of concerns, all of us are
11 involved in this. We are called rural America
12 whether we live in Rochelle or Paw Paw from
13 where I am from. I have 7 children, 24
14 grandchildren, been around for a few years,
15 early on the Board growing from the secretary to
16 president, and I hear your stories.

17 I hear your sadness. I hear your
18 emotions, this Board needs to hear them but we
19 have been told and directed that all are
20 concerned about was the environmental and
21 issues. Well, since when did we become part of
22 the environment?

23 My concerns are that this LLC group is
24 a group of very large investors, oh, by the way

1 the lady who was concerned about one of them,
2 one of them is Warren Buffett and he got
3 involved with every one of them because he has
4 got to put more money in his pocket.

5 Now, if I came to these individuals
6 anywhere and said, you know, I like your
7 backyard. I want to put a bicycle path there
8 and serve the whole community. Would that be a
9 good idea? It wouldn't for you but for the rest
10 of the community it would be a great idea.

11 My back doorstep is 297 feet from this
12 proposed railroad. I am not known to be one of
13 the nicest people in the community. I am also
14 not one of the quietest people in the community.
15 That's my statement.

16 My question is was this meeting even
17 necessary? According to my understanding,
18 current Illinois law does not allow private
19 entities to use eminent domain to put a railroad
20 on your backstairs or put take your property
21 away from you which means it has to be changed
22 if they are going to do this.

23 Folks, it boils down to this, I must
24 have lost it on the way up here, you all have

1 some of these in your pocket, this is what it
2 will take in the State of Illinois to put this
3 railroad through. I know I got 30 seconds. I
4 said it in the nicest way. It boils down to the
5 all mighty dollar. There is a group of
6 investors who want to make more money to put in
7 with their billion of dollars, and many of these
8 comments were is it necessary? Probably not.
9 Could they upgrade existing railroads or use
10 abandoned railroad lines? They probably could
11 but here is a chance to make a killing and we
12 can get away with it because we have all kinds
13 of high dollar attorneys to put it through.

14 So what it boils down to is we need to
15 become united as rural America and say enough,
16 enough is enough. You know, you aren't going to
17 like this statement, especially the gentleman
18 over there, but 150, 200 years ago if you came
19 in to take my property, I didn't go get an
20 attorney. Thank you.

21 ASHLEY SIMMS: Good evening. My name
22 is Ashley Simms. A-S-H-L-E-Y Simms, S-I-M-M-S.
23 I am a lifelong resident of Ogle County, born
24 and raised. I serve currently on the Ogle

1 County Board. I currently live here in Rochelle
2 but my dream has been to move out nearby folks
3 to farm which is this rail line is going to
4 split the family farm right in half less than a
5 quarter mile from their house and then cut right
6 through the area of where we farm.

7 My main concern I work in healthcare
8 and my main concern is safety, No. 1. If this
9 railroad comes through, the response time for
10 our first responders cuts in drastically. For
11 example, unfortunately about 14 years ago we had
12 a house fire and it was kind of my fault. I was
13 a young teenager, I fell asleep with a candle in
14 my room. Woke up, found the fire alarms, my
15 mother screaming what's that smell and where is
16 this fire coming from and thank God we all got
17 out okay, but we had -- by the grace of God we
18 had our first responders there and if it had
19 been five more minutes, our house would have
20 been a complete and total loss so we owe it to
21 the amazing response time for our first
22 responders.

23 With this railroad coming through I am
24 really concerned minutes count. I am really

1 concerned that if it's something tragic does
2 happen, a tornado a fire, major flooding is
3 coming through, if our responders can't get
4 there in time, lives will be at stake and I have
5 two young children who love to go out to mama
6 and papa's house and they are free to run and
7 roam on the land that they have and to be
8 concerned of a railroad coming through to go
9 mama, papa's farm is just that would be
10 unfortunate.

11 So safety is my No. 1 concern here and
12 I appreciate you guys coming all the way over to
13 DC to listen to every one of us and good luck on
14 your long couple years of research, so thank you
15 so much.

16 MIRIAH RANKEN: Miriah Ranken,
17 M-I-R-I-A-H, Ranken, R-A-N-K-E-N. I believe
18 Ogle County has done a great job touching on all
19 these topics. One thing that was not mentioned
20 that I just wanted to make the Board aware of is
21 that currently there are nine species of
22 threatened or endangered animals that have been
23 observed in Ogle County since 2001. There is
24 also 33 species of threatened or endangered

1 plant species that have been observed in Ogle
2 County as of 2001 so I would want to make sure
3 any railroad that could possibly go in would not
4 effect any of those. That's it. It's been a
5 long night.

6 MR. GRAVES: Ladies and gentlemen,
7 thank you for being here tonight and providing
8 your comments. If you would like to make
9 written comments to the Surface Transportation
10 Board, you can do so on the Surface
11 Transportation Board website and through the
12 mail-in information on your project brochures.

13 As David mentioned during his
14 presentation when we started the meeting, the
15 comment period has been extended to June 15th.
16 And just once again, thank you to the first
17 responders from Rochelle and surrounding
18 jurisdictions and all the people who supported
19 the gentleman with the cardiac arrest earlier
20 tonight, so with that I think we can conclude.
21 Thank you very much.

22 --000000--
23
24

4/20/2016

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that I, PAULA ANN ERICKSON, CSR, RPR, CLR and Notary Public, do hereby certify that I reported in machine shorthand the proceedings held at the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line EIS Public Scoping Meeting, on April 20, 2016 and that this transcript is a true and accurate transcription of my machine shorthand notes so taken to the best of my ability.



PAULA ERICKSON, CSR, RPR

License No. 084-003899

Dated this 17th day
of May 2016.

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