

March 27, 2016

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington DC
Docket No. FD 35952

I am writing to express my extreme opposition to the proposed Great Lakes Basin rail project. There are so many arguments against this project that I will limit myself to three: 1. Environmental issues, mainly water and drainage issues, 2. Possible use of eminent domain for a private project and 3. Existence of another group called CREATE, to address the precise issues that Great Lakes has in mind for their project ie rail congestion in the region.

I am a lifelong resident of Paw Paw, Illinois. Paw Paw is located in Wyoming Township, Lee County, Illinois. I happen to be a Board member of both Wyoming Township and Lee County. I also own and operate a farm located about 1 mile from the proposed rail line.

Environmental issues are very important to us farmers. We have partnered with the United States Dept. of Agriculture to very carefully plan individual and joint water management practices. These practices have, over a long period of time, reduced erosion, cleaned our waterways, encouraged wildlife and farmland preservation. Construction of the magnitude of this project will forever change and damage the projects that we have worked on so hard for the past hundred years. Every single farm along this line will be affected, along with adjoining farms that will have drainage problems obstructing natural water flow patterns. Some of this land will become unfarmable, and this some of the richest farmland in the world. We are confident that the Environmental Protection Administration and the U.S. Dept of Agriculture will join in the opposition to this project.

The power of eminent domain is one of our nation's most crucial rights. That is because our basis of individual freedom is addressed in the U.S. Constitution. It should be used carefully and fairly. It should not be used because a private company wants to make a few bucks by treading on the rights of productive citizens. Please don't let it happen.

It is my understanding that there is a joint public/private organization called CREATE that is already working on many issues concerning regional transportation issues. It has representation from federal, state, regional and local transportation bodies, along with representatives from the railroads, airlines and other related parties. This organization was brought together to address transportation issues in an open, orderly manner. None of the railroads in this area has endorsed the Great Lakes project.

I have chosen these three issues from a list of many others, including economic impact, safety, land values, and quality of life concerns. It is my hope that the Surface Transportation Board will take all this into consideration. I believe that you have the responsibility and the authority to put a stop to this project before it goes any farther.

Sincerely, *Michael Zeman*

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