

11/7/16

RE: STB Docket # FD 35952  
TO: Surface Transportation Board  
Attention: David Navecky  
Dear Sir,

I wish to reiterate my  
opposition to the GLBT plan  
for building their railroad

I have attached (3)  
documents that support  
finding in favor of the  
Citizens against GLBT.

Thank you,

Sharl R. Crandall

6817 Freeport Road  
Rockton, Illinois 61072



4761 Bluestem Road • P.O. Box 795  
Roscoe, Illinois 61073  
(815) 623-8300  
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FYI

#1

Local  
Economic's Professor's  
Analysis, Rockford College

Ezee

# NO ECONOMIC BENEFIT for proposed railroad

I am writing in response to Chuck Sweeney's article, "Railroad is good for region." Normally I would be in Sweeney's corner on an issue like this, but in this case, I am not. This is not a question of morality, social justice or "holding up progress" but almost purely a textbook problem in economics.

Not even a cost vs. benefit problem, but more technically, a "marginal cost vs. marginal benefit" analysis. This is because it is not an either/or situation. We already have rail service to this area. The only question is whether the extra benefit of shaving a few hours or days of transit time around the Chicago bottleneck is greater than the extra cost of providing the service, at least to the people who live in the affected area.

The NIMBYs have swarmed all over this proposal and correctly identified both sides of the cost vs. benefit equation. Most of the costs that they are concerned with are what economists would call "negative externalities." You and I would call them unwanted side effects, such as traffic delays, noise, pollution, and safety issues. The direct costs to affected property owners would be pretty much taken care of by eminent domain laws and lawsuits, and of course the investors would pay the costs of actually building the railroad.

From the perspective of local residents, the equation looks something like this:

Costs = Traffic delays, noise, safety and environmental problems.

Benefits = None.

In fact, the economic benefits of the proposed railroad to this area are about the same as those produced by an airliner passing overhead on its way from New York to San Francisco.

The costs could be somewhat mitigated by the developers paying for above ground crossings at major intersections to prevent traffic delays and providing funding to local emergency providers for adding staff, training and equipment to deal with the inevitable derailments and toxic spills.

The benefit side of



KURT HARRIS

the equation could be somewhat improved if the developers would offer to share some of the revenue with local taxing bodies in order to help compensate local residents for some of the negative effects of the railroad. The fact that they are not offering to do these things speaks volumes.

But what about some other possible benefits? We can look at the ones suggested by Sweeney and others:

**Jobs:** Most people employed to construct the railroad would not be local, and in any case, the jobs would be temporary. Once the railroad is completed few people would be needed to maintain it.

**Possible link to the airport:** This might make sense if air freight and rail freight were the same goods, but they are not. Not until people start shipping coal, crude oil and John Deere tractors by air. What about passenger travel? Unfortunately, there is not now nor will there ever be passenger rail service to this area. Not enough people live here or will use the service to pay for it. Travelers that need a rail link already can fly to Chicago.

**Industrial development:** There is already rail service to this area. Few industries use it, and those who do would not be likely to pay extra to improve service. Any freight that is time sensitive to local industry already travels by truck.

From a purely economic point of view, I don't see a lot to recommend this project, at least to those who will be most affected. The biggest beneficiaries would be the investors of the GLB railroad, and that is only if they can keep all of the profits for themselves and pass all of the costs on to others. In this case, I hate to say, I think the NIMBYs are correct.

—Kurt Harris, B.S., Economics, Rockford College, 1976.

The statements put forth  
in this letter still apply  
to opposing GLBT's planned  
railroad. Chicago has  
always been and will continue  
to be able to handle their  
problems without GLBT. The  
"City of the Big Shoulders" can  
handle this.



**TONI PRECKWINKLE**

PRESIDENT

Cook County Board  
of Commissioners

**RICHARD R. BOYKIN**

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**ROBERT STEELE**

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16th District

**SEAN M. MORRISON**

17th District

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS

**JOHN YONAN, P.E.**

SUPERINTENDENT

69 W. Washington Street, 23<sup>rd</sup> Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60602-1304 • (312) 603-3610

STILL  
pertains

April 14, 2016

Surface Transportation Board

STB Docket No. FD 35952

Dear Surface Transportation Board:

I am writing to voice my objection to the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. (GLBT) and their plan to construct and operate an approximately 278-mile rail line.

Since the GLBT is designed to serve freight movements, the momentum and resources built in the last 15 years by the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) to support the freight industry in Cook County and the City of Chicago and Cook County could be jeopardized by the construction of the GLBT, which will induce the construction of new freight facilities at the edge of the Chicago metropolitan area and beyond. These areas currently are not well served by a transportation network and that will most certainly force Illinois Taxpayers to fund the needed roads and bridges and other infrastructure to support this development. I believe the proposed cost of the project is severely underestimated. The proposal to ensure all roadways would be grade separated, and the proposed river crossings cannot be accurately estimated. Once again Illinois Taxpayers and Local Residents will be affected by the proposed grade separations which may include roadways over the railroad, which no doubt will cost the government or railroads over roadways which will require an enormous amount of Right-of-Way that once again cannot possibly be estimated at this time.

The proposed rail line serving as a potential bypass for hazardous material is not a sustainable argument. The limited number of First Responders with limited resources from mostly rural communities would be severely challenged to control any hazardous spill. If a hazardous cloud was released, the location of the GLBT and the predominately northeast winds in this region, Cook County and the City of Chicago would be greatly impacted.

The proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line will, at best, only address a very small part of the region's freight congestion. Cook County's Department of Transportation and Highways is proceeding with a long range transportation plan and an analysis to identify and prioritize freight pinch points and possible solutions. Those studies will yield a more comprehensive range of projects to address freight congestion and promote development.

Sincerely,

  
John Yonan, P.E.  
Superintendent

\$ Fiscal Responsibility • Innovative Leadership • Transparency & Accountability • Improved Services

Note :

#3

① Rockford Mayor Morrissey has announced he will not run for re-election. ✓

② County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen is all done. ✓

# GLB Railroad promises false hopes, raises fears

BY PAUL GORSKI  
CONTRIBUTOR

The Great Lakes Basin Railroad (GLBRR) is a rail line proposed by a private group that promises to relieve regional freight train congestion. This would be done by developing a new multi-state private rail line that bypasses Chicago and cuts across hundreds of acres of Illinois farmland, including some in western Winnebago County. Suffice to say, many of the landowners and villages in the path of the proposed rail line have serious doubts and concerns about sacrificing their property for a private, toll-based railroad. For good reason.

To those business professionals reading this, imagine someone asking you to partner with them: "I'd like to build this new product. I don't have any experience building this product, I don't have any customers signed up for the product, and my potential customers are already committed to using my competitor's product." You would say, "Sure, what do you need from me?" No, probably not. Nevertheless, that is what local leaders including Larry Morrissey, Scott Christiansen and Michael Dunn, Jr. agreed to in July of 2015. More on that later.

The sponsor of the GLBRR does not have much if any previous experience in rail transportation. Two of the six major railroads that



MEET JOHN DOE

might use the service have said they will not use it. The remaining four rail carriers have not supported the project. In addition, there is also at least one big project, the CREATE Program which is working to relieve rail congestion in northern Illinois. CREATE has the support and participation of the six major rail carriers in question.

Despite this, the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP) stated its support for the GLBRR in its 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan dated July 30, 2015. Among those leaders were: Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey, County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen and RMAP Executive Director Michael Dunn Jr. The RMAP plan has big ideas for the sketchy GLBRR, hoping for rail connections to the

Rockford airport.

The GLBRR project has been in the news recently because many local residents oppose the project because of its potential negative impact on the county. Fueling the fire, County Board Chairman candidates John Nelson and Frank Haney have come out on different sides of the debate. Nelson sides with the residents; Haney with the project. Well, sort of, depending on the day.

Haney has twisted and turned on his position regarding the GLBRR. First, he is for it, then he will wait until the environmental review, then he will take in under consideration, and now, apparently he might be against it. I cannot see how he can be against it. The GLBRR project has the support of his mentors: Larry Morrissey, Scott Christiansen and Michael Dunn Jr.

Haney is friends with, served on a college board with, and received campaign help from Dunn Jr. Dunn Jr. is also the son of Mike Dunn Sr., who heads the Rockford airport, which again, figures prominently in RMAP's plan for the GLBRR. Funny how things like that turnout in this county.

Haney has some of the same big contributors as Christiansen, and has many of the same friends, advisors and campaign contributors as Morrissey. When push comes to shove, as a final county board action on the

GLBRR, who do you think Haney will side with: residents of Winnebago County; or his friends, family and the big money that put him in office? Follow the money.

Nelson has been consistent, siding with the concerned residents. Most of these residents are raising land use and environmental concerns. I say focus on the basic premise of the plan and the people offering up the plan. Who will use the rail line? Why would the rail carriers support this project and the multi-billion dollar CREATE Program?

I cannot help but feel this project raises the same false hopes the failed proposed ethanol plant did, which was to some people simply a scam, a scam that blinded many with the false promise of jobs and economic development.

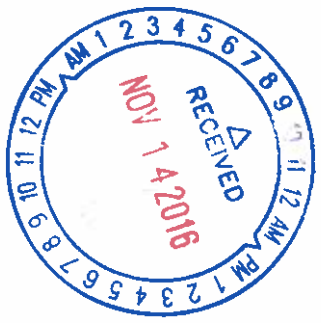
The proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad raises legitimate fears and concerns. I encourage residents to continue asking their questions and demand more hearings on the project. Share this message with family, friends and neighbors. The local insiders supporting this plan will not stop or relent. You should not either.

Paul Gorski is a resident of Cherry Valley Township, Winnebago County and serves as a Cherry Valley Township Trustee. This article was written with Rock River Times publisher Frank Schier in mind.

*Support to his opponent, John Doe*

CRANDALL  
6817 FREEDPORT RD.  
ROCKTON, IL 61072

CAROL STREAM, IL 60131  
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Mr. David Hareley  
STB  
395 E - Street S.W.  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

RE: #  
DOCKET 35952

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