

Other Submissions

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Docket #: FD -35952 - -

Subject: * Great Lakes Basin

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Message:



Letter to STB.pdf

To whom it may concern,

In its current alignment, the Great Lakes Basin (GLB) Railroad does not go through the Town of LaCrosse. However, LaCrosse is within the area of study for the proposed railroad and recently has been suggested as a town along which alternatives might pass. Lake, Porter, and Kankakee Counties have suggested the GLB make use of abandoned or active rail within or near town limits. These suggestions may not be beneficial to locals and some possess a high number of detrimental attributes. As a resident, business owner, and elected official who lives and works in LaCrosse I would like to provide facts that may be useful in determining future alignments of the GLB.

- 1) **Use of the abandoned Monon Railroad.** When searching for a north-south route to bring the GLB line up towards Pinola, multiple people have suggested using the old Monon Railroad. This, however, is not a desirable route due to developments after the line was removed.
 - 1) Festival Park, which includes approximately 0.3 miles of multi-use paved trail, is partially built on the old Monon right-of-way.
 - 2) The Monon right-of-way would likely only support one or two rails, but certainly not the four which the GLB will possibly expand to.
 - 3) There is insufficient space surrounding the right-of-way when it crosses State Route 8 in order to build a grade separated crossing like Mr. Patton mentions would be included for highways. The right-of-way run too close to the ditch to build up to an overpass and the water level of the ditch makes going under impractical as well.
 - 4) The route runs parallel to Cook ditch, which flows into the Kankakee not far from LaCrosse. Spills or runoff from railcars, depending on circumstance, could impact the wildlife throughout the Kankakee River ecosystem.
 - 5) The threat of water contamination may also be problematic for the Town's water supply, which comes from a well driven around 600 feet away from the Monon right-of-way.
 - 6) The Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), which I am a member of, has long-term plans to utilize the Monon right-of-way for a bike trail that would eventually run the length of LaPorte County.
- 2) **Use of the abandoned segment of the Pere Marquette Railroad to connect to the current CKIN Line.** The Chicago & West Michigan Railroad, which was built in 1882 and is presently operated by CKIN, originally connected to the Monon Railroad in LaCrosse. When the Monon Railroad was removed, so was the portion that ran southwest of the Chicago, Richmond & Muncie Railroad (built in 1902; also operated by CKIN presently). The Chicago & West Michigan Railroad would later become known as the Pere Marquette. Some have suggested following the Monon Railroad up to LaCrosse and then rebuilding the abandoned segment of the Pere Marquette over to CKIN Line. This alternative also shares many of the complications of using just the Monon Railroad.
 - 1) The Pere Marquette right-of-way makes up a large portion of the land that Festival Park was built upon. To build through it would make the park unusable.
 - 2) The Pere Marquette line runs right next to the Town's water tower and within a hundred feet of its wellhead.
 - 3) There is insufficient space to build grade separated crossings over State Route 8 and US 421. Train traffic blocking those two routes would severely impact road traffic and could prevent prompt responses by emergency services.

- 4) Like the Monon Railroad, the right-of-way would not be able to accommodate more than one, possibly two, lines through the town. Growth of the GLB Line would invariably be limited.
 - 5) The route would be approximately 400 feet from LaCrosse High School.
- 3) **Utilizing the existing CKIN Line through LaCrosse.** Another county has suggested picking up the CKIN Line in North Judson and the route following it into LaCrosse where it would head towards Union Mills. This alternative would carry the largest impact on LaCrosse residents.
- 1) CKIN runs within 50 feet of the LaCrosse Public Library.
 - 2) The line runs within 400 feet of LaCrosse High School.
 - 3) The LaCrosse Baseball/Softball Fields are located adjacent to the line and would be impacted by substantial train traffic.
 - 4) This route has room only for the existing single rail that goes through town and there is no room to expand to a second rail.
 - 5) The point at which the CKIN Line curves sharply to the northeast would require train traffic to slow down significantly. Slowed train traffic would result in long closures to State Route 8.
 - 6) There is not enough available land surrounding the crossing at State Route 8 to build a grade separated crossing. Slowly passing trains would separate emergency responders from the east side of town and impact response times.
 - 7) Approximately 50%, if not more, of the town's residences would be significantly impacted by train noise in such an alignment.
 - 8) If the end of this line is in LaPorte, picking up the CKIN Line in North Judson and jogging back west would be an inefficient way to travel.

Please see the attached diagrams of the routes that have been mentioned.

Ultimately, I believe a line taken directly through the town of LaCrosse would not benefit the citizens of this community and should be avoided at all costs.

Sincerely,

Justin Kiel
LaCrosse Town Council President



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INDIANA 8

Water Tower

Wellhead

Google

421

