



Great Lakes Basin Rail Line

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

June 6, 2016

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How Do I Submit Comments?

EI-24200

- **Written Comments:** Complete and submit this form at a public meeting, or mail your comments to the Surface Transportation Board's address at the bottom of this page.
- **Recorded Comments:** Provide your comments to a court reporter at a public meeting.
- **Electronic Comments:** Submit electronic comments by visiting the Surface Transportation Board's website, www.stb.dot.gov, and clicking on the "E-Filing" link and then clicking on "Environmental Comments."

Please refer to Docket No. FD 35952 in all correspondence addressed to the Surface Transportation Board. The comment deadline is June 15, 2016.

Dear Mr. Navecky,

The Great Lakes Basin Rail Line if allowed will have immediate and long lasting negative effects on the lives of many farmers, business owners, and property owners of the involved communities.

- Many of the farmers will have their land cut into small parcels that will be unusable due to loss of access and equipment will be too big to navigate the smaller parcels. Also, grazing land will be cut off. Farmers will need to buy additional feed to supplement this loss. Farmers may have to reduce their herd size.

- The US loses 1 1/2 million acres of farmland a year due to development. Many of our area farmers are part of the Farmland Conservation Program trying to keep the land for farming.

NOTE: When an individual chooses to submit comments on this project, some of the comments, his or her name, and information is considered public information and is shared within and outside of STB without additional authorization.

Robin Rios

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Comments may be submitted today or mailed to:

lose land how
will we feed the
citizens of our
country and the
world.

Dave Navecky

Surface Transportation Board

ATTN: Docket No. FD 35952

295 E Street NW

Washington, D.C. 20423-0001



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For each one mile of track, twenty-four acres of farmland will be lost forever.

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- The farm soil in Rock County is recognized as some of the richest in the country and the world due to its plano, silt, and loam deposited during the Ice Age. It cannot be replaced if this rail line goes bankrupt. The 200 ft easement indicates the owners plan to expand in the future. The amount of land taken by the easements will put some farmers out of business.
- Farming and Dairy are major industries in Wisconsin. These men and women are small business owners. This land belongs to them. They paid for it, they maintain it, they pay taxes on it. Railroads do not pay property taxes.

NOTE: When an individual chooses to submit an Environmental Comment or some Other Submissions, his or her personal contact information is considered public information and is shared within and outside of STB without additional authorization.

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395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001



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- The proposed railroad will cross multiple roads including Hwy 14 and City Rd A two heavily used roadways. IF 110 trains per day will be expected as repeated commuter access and emergency services could be greatly hindered or reduced in some areas.
- Wildlife is plentiful. What will be the long term effect on these populations?
- Noise pollution will affect people and farm animals alike. The Barless Farm (directly affected) raise world renowned Jersey cows. The concern is the noise will affect birthing numbers and milk production.
- Water pollution will affect the natural springs over the well is getting polluted. Water is used on what spills could contaminate and render useless even more farmland. This water is used by people and animals alike.

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To protect farmland from Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin please use existing rail lines and retired rail lines. Alternatives have been suggested by Rock County Board member Al Sweeney. I have enclosed the article for you to read. The Rock County Board has voted against the Great Lakes Basin Rail line. The Norfolk Southern Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad both say they will not use the line. Thank you for taking the time to read this response to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail line. In my opinion this would be a great mistake with far reaching negative repercussions.

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LOCAL

Sweeney suggests rail route alternatives

County supervisor suggests using existing rail lines

By Catherine W. Idzerda
cidzerda@gazettextra.com

JANESVILLE

Rerouting a proposed rail line proposed for eastern Rock County might reduce its impact on farmland and give a boost to local infrastructure, a Rock County Board member said.

County board member Al Sweeney and Boone County, Illinois, officials hope to send a letter to the federal Surface Transportation Board with alternatives to the controversial rail line proposed by the Great Lakes Basin Transportation. The line would start east of Milton and run south around Chicago to La Porte, Indiana.



Sweeney

Supporters say the new rail line would spur economic development and let trains avoid the congestion in the Chicago rail yards, which can bog down trains for up to 30 hours.

Opponents say the rail line would gobble up more than 585 acres of farmland, significantly delay emergency responders and radically alter the community.

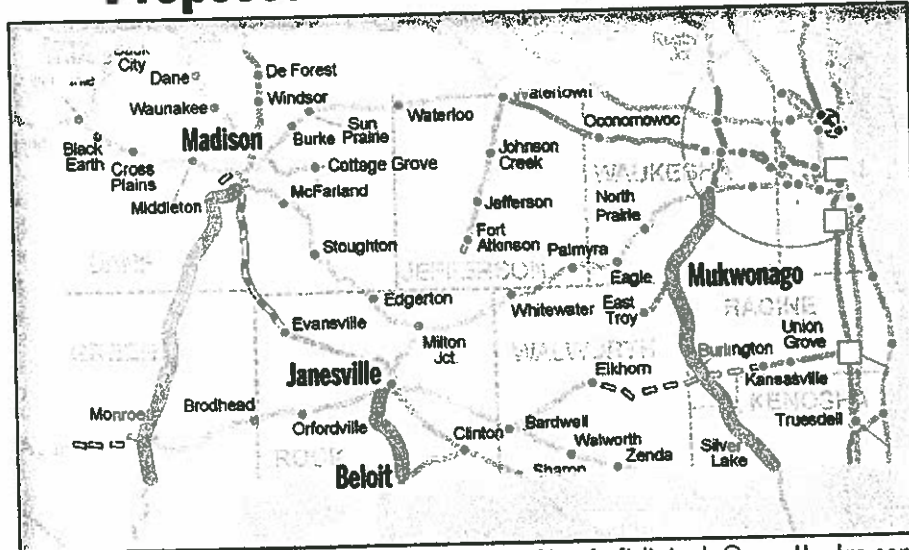
The Surface Transportation Board is taking comments on the proposed project until mid-June.

Sweeney, who also serves as chairman for the Rock River Rail Transit Commission, said he had talked to Boone County officials, but they not had come to an agreement about specific alternative routes.

The three alternate routes include:

- The Canadian National line that runs from Waukesha County south to Mukwonago, Burlington and Silver Lake. On the northern end, the tracks would have easy access to the Port of Milwaukee. Just south of the state line, the tracks would turn to pick up Union Pacific lines. Or new track would go west and then head south near Belvidere, Illinois.

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN Proposed alternative railroad routes



Tony DiNicola/tdinicola@gazettextra.com

The track would have to be upgraded. Sweeney said that this would be the most likely possibility.

- The Iowa, Chicago and Eastern Railroad that runs from Janesville south to Beloit.

This track would also have to be upgraded.

- The rails-to-trails path from Madison to Monroe. Sweeney said that although the rails might be gone, the infrastructure is still there.

"My concern is to take care of the freight coming out of Rock County," Sweeney said.

The newly proposed line would be a "blow through for freight from Canada," Sweeney said.

In a draft letter to the Surface Transportation Board, Sweeney recommends using already existing lines. Not only would it be more cost effective, but they would also be more in line with Boone and Rock counties comprehensive plans.

In Boone County, officials planned for industrial growth west of Belvidere. A transload facility, a place where freight is transferred from one form of transportation to another, was proposed by the Irene

Road/Interstate 90 interchange. From there, a rail spur to the route south would be more consistent with Boone County's plans, the draft letter says.

Would any of those options be feasible?

Jim Wilson, president of the Great Lakes Basin Railroad, said they are willing to look at any options. However, the company hoped to keep the line away from major population areas.

"We're trying not to run it through any communities," Wilson said.

"We want to have a safety corridor in case of a derailment, spill or a leak. If there is an issue, it's a lot easier to evacuate two or three families than several thousand people."

In designing the current proposed route, they tried to keep the rail line at least one-quarter to one-half mile from subdivisions.

Another reason for creating a new line is to prepare for the future, Wilson said.

A 200-foot easement is planned for utilities, but Wilson said that they are "definitely interested" in seeing more light industry alongside the new railroad.

Mr. Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 35952
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Mr. Navecky,

After reviewing the available information about the proposed Great Lakes Basin (GLB) rail project, it is my opinion that the proposed GLB project has failed to sufficiently provide documentation that supports public convenience and necessity. Further more I believe that fast tracking this project and waiving the six month notification period was an error on the part of the STB. For the following reasons I respectfully request that the STB cease any further action on this project.

NEED

- The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program - a collaboration between rail companies, local, state and federal government - is in the process of implementing physical and managerial improvements to make the rail system in Chicago more efficient in order to decrease delays. Letters from the Class I rail lines in response to the July 13, 2015 letter by the Chairman of the STB Daniel R. Elliot, II, indicate the CREATE project, although not completed, is improving the delays in Chicago.
- The GLB proposed project undermines and subverts the CREATE program.
- The GLB project is neither comprehensive, visionary, or collaborative. The proposed project is not part of any federal, state or local long-term freight plan. It is strictly a commercial venture by a for-profit company.
- There is no publicly available business plan for the proposed rail line to document public convenience, necessity or benefits.
- GLB documentation does not describe a need for the 50 foot utility easement (beyond stating that it is a potential revenue source), or the need for the proposed 15,000 acre Kankakee rail terminal, which is five times larger than the largest rail yard in the world. The Surface Transportation Board's (STB) jurisdiction to approve a utility corridor is also in question.
- Union Pacific and Norfolk-Southern have publicly stated that they are not interested in the proposed GLB project. Instead they prefer to work with the CREATE program in Chicago.
- Canadian National invested heavily in their own Chicago bypass by purchasing the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway line and are therefore less likely to use the proposed GLB toll rail.
- The letter from Norfolk Southern Corporation's legal department (filed as EI-22974 under FD-35952) states that Norfolk-Southern does not have a non-disclosure agreement with GLB, nor is it interested in using the proposed rail. It also states that no information about current rail movements or traffic volumes was provided for the GLB project. This raises the question whether there are any "non-disclosure agreements" at all. It also makes one wonder about the market research that was done, or not done, for this project.
- Mr. John Yonan, P. E., Superintendent of the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways writes the following in his letter to the STB: "*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.*"

PUBLIC CONVENIENCE

- I find no evidence that the proposed GLB Chicago bypass has been identified as a solution to the Chicago bottleneck, a public convenience, or a national transportation priority (as Mr. Patton asserts). It is a business proposal by a for-profit company.
- Due to the fact that the route of the proposed rail will likely change (Mr. Patton's words) people in an area of over 32,220 square miles have lived in uncertainty about the future of their homes, farms and livelihood.
- The potential for unwanted rail - and the use of eminent domain - has increased stress for land and property owners.
- Farm fields divided by the proposed rail will be more difficult and dangerous (due to farm field crossings) to manage. Productivity of the land will decrease due to construction of the rail, odd shaped parcels and increased compaction. Costly irrigation and tiling infrastructure will be damaged and rendered useless.
- Government has spend millions of tax dollars preserving farmland, woodlands and promoting good agricultural practices. Farmers spend thousands of dollars on soil conservation practices. The proposed rail line is counter-productive to these efforts.
- Home and land owners near the proposed rail will see their home and land values reduced.
- GLB intends to be a toll railroad. Investors in this proposed project will have only their own financial interest in mind, not the public convenience.
- Opposition to the proposed project has been overwhelming, seven of eleven counties involved have passed resolutions opposing the GLB rail. Mr. Patton has stated that he will take land by eminent domain if the proposed project is approved.
- The loss of thousands of acres of prime farmland cannot possibly be considered a public convenience. Taking highly productive land out of production for a speculative for-profit project is not in the public's best interest

The above provided information is what led me to the conclusion that the proposed GLB project is inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity. It was insufficiently vetted before starting the approval process. I respectfully request that the STB cease work on this project. Individually, or as part of a group, I will fight the GLB proposed plan using all options available, including Congress, my vote at the ballot box and the judicial system.

Signature

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