

To the Surface Transportation Board

RE: Docket No. FD 35952 Great Lakes Basin Rail Line Project

I/ WE respectfully request that the STB study the issues listed below and that it deny the above referenced project.

1. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

* **Alternative:** This is a description of the purpose of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program: "CREATE is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the U.S. DOT, the State of Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, **and** the nation's freight railroads. A project of national significance, **CREATE will invest billions in critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure** and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents."

The Union Pacific Railroad has stated that it is not interested in moving forward on the GLBR bypass project. It is "focused on several major public-private partnerships, including CREATE, which will benefit the region and enhance the efficiency for Chicago-area and regional railroad operations." **Satisfying the purpose of the proposed project is already being dealt with by major government entities and major railroads. The STB should deny this petition outright.**

* GLBR project is NOT a collaborative project like the CREATE project . No Class I has publicly endorsed the project, Union Pacific has publicly stated it is not interested.

* GLBR project is NOT part of any comprehensive Federal Rail project nor of the Illinois State Rail plan, the GoTO 2040 plan (which emphasizes better funding of CREATE and development of a Federal Plan to address the freight needs of the nation), or the Wisconsin State Rail Plan 2030

* **Alternative:** Whoever would benefit from relieving the congestion in the Chicago terminal could hire Google and have them send a team of their engineers to determine how technology can be used to make the Chicago terminal more efficient. They are currently developing cars that drive themselves. Google is an organization that has concerns for the environment. They can help save precious needed farmland and can help preserve the peace and tranquility of the country. **The inefficiencies of the Chicago train terminal should not be solved by creating a problem in the countryside.**

* **Alternative:** The stated purpose of the proposed GLBR Rail project is to alleviate rail congestion in the rail yard on the south side of Chicago. According to GLBT documents it can take up to 30 hours for a train car to get through this yard.

An alternative to building a new track and destroying thousands of acres of farmland would be to have better planning/coordination between railroads prior to reaching the Chicago rail yard. The Union Pacific railroad operates a switch yard on the south side of Janesville, Wisconsin that has been underutilized since the closing of the General Motors plant in Janesville. The Burlington Northern Santa

Fe, Canadian Pacific, and Canadian National railroads all have access opportunities via the State of Wisconsin owned track operated by Wisconsin Southern or Wisconsin Great National railroads.

The Union Pacific rail yard in Janesville could be used as an ancillary switch yard (staging yard) to group railcars together based on destination. The Union Pacific railroad could forward the grouped trains on a daily AM and PM schedule similar to schedules when GM was operating. This provides an opportunity to minimize the number of switches required upon arrival in Chicago which would reduce the amount of time it takes for a railcar to pass through the yard. Trains coming out of Chicago could be handled in the reverse order.

The rail lines owned by the State of Wisconsin would require upgrades to accommodate this alternative. The involved railroads would need detailed planning and coordination in order to make it work.

This is an alternative that would use existing rail resources to alleviate the Chicago yard delays that are occurring today rather than destroying our farmland.

2. SAFETY

- * There will be an increased amount of railroad crossings which will be hazardous to school busses, farm equipment and individuals. Based upon national statistics about the number of accidents related to crossings, how many will that be per year from this 270 miles of track?
- * The majority of the at-grade rail crossings in Rock County do not meet the road at a 90 degree angle, decreasing the safety of the crossing. What percentage of the crossings does not meet a 90 degree angle?
- * There will be longer response times for police, fire and ambulance vehicles due to railroad crossings. Based upon the volume of 110 trains per day, and the average number of these emergency vehicles crossing the new tracks, what will be the estimated delay time for these vehicles?
- * There will be the increased possibility of oil and chemical spills and derailments with high speed rail on curves. What is the cost of one derailment of a train carrying oil? Who will be responsible for paying the cleanup cost? Will there be a fund set aside for such an event?
- * There will be a need for extensive training and equipment to deal with large spills and derailments. Who will bear the cost of this training and equipment?
- * The rail disrupts fire, medical personnel, police and volunteers. Determine the additional cost for additional volunteer time due to disruptions.

3. IMPACT ON CURRENT LAND USE

- * This results in permanent destruction of prime farmland. Approximately 6,700 acres: 24 per mile for 270 miles. What will be the annual revenue lost per acre?
- * Large fields will be divided into smaller pieces which will decrease productivity and cost small farmers money. How much will that amount to?
- * There will be increased compaction of soils due to shorter rows. How will this affect farmers' revenue?
- * Farm implements may be too big to use on newly created smaller fields. How much farm revenue will be lost by not being able to farm these smaller fields?
- * Large amounts of fill are needed to build 'fly-overs' and bridges. Where will this come from?
- * Livestock may wander onto tracks due to poor or broken fencing. How much will farmers lose due to

these accidents?

- * Who will be responsible for maintaining the unused portion of the 200 foot wide easement?
- * Zoning laws will prevent the vast majority of landowners to make use of the offered free access to the rail, making this a hollow offer. What percentage of landowners will this apply to?
- * How many Local and County zoning laws does this project violate?

4. RECREATION

- * What will be the impact on recreational areas including woods that are used for recreational hunting?
- * Are there any parks within 5 miles of the rail line?
- * What snow mobile trails, in particular on the Pelishek trail as well as horseback riding on Pelishek trail, will be affected by this rail line?

5. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- * What will be the damage to existing field tile lines and who will pay to reroute them? How will that impact the wildlife along the rail line?
- * Will there be increased use of herbicides to maintain unused portions of the easement? If so, how will that impact the wildlife and crops along the line?
- * The U. of I. Wildlife directory says that the Eastern Wild Turkey is the only turkey species found in Illinois. It became extinct in Illinois in 1910 and was reintroduced through conservation efforts. How will the new line affect its natural habitat?
- * How will the new rail line affect the nesting grounds of the Bald Eagle found in North Central Illinois? They are protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- * What will be the impact of the following that can be found along the rail line and which are on the US Wildlife Endangered Species List:
 - The Indiana Bat and the Northern Long-Eared Bat?
 - Plants: the Descurrent False Aster, Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid and the Leafy Prairie Clover (Endangered)?
 - The Prairie Bush Clover?
 - Crustaceans and other species: Scaleshell, Sheepnose Mussel, Rattlesnake-master borer moth (candidate)?

6. WATER RESOURCES

- * The natural grade of the land will be altered disrupting the natural flow of surface water, potentially creating artificial ponds and wetlands. How much farm acreage will be lost as a result? What will be the impact on wildlife?
- * Stagnant water will lead to issues with mosquitos and wildlife. How will the wildlife be affected?
- * Stream banks, drainage ditches, and creeks will be altered. How will this affect the flow of water during large rains?
- * What is the impact on the underground water supply due to spills and/or derailments?

7. NAVIGATION

- * There will be delays at crossings for farm machinery and equipment. What will the cost to farmers be due to lost productivity?
- * How many land locked fields and pastures will be created? What is the loss of value for these properties?
- * What will be the increased traffic of farm equipment on township and county roads due to road closings?

- * What will be the impact on farmers by not being able to evacuate valuable livestock in case of emergency due to train crossing delays?

8. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

- * What is the potential risk of permanent damage to surrounding soil with the transport of oil and chemicals?
- * What will be the lost crop production due to the loss of approximately 6,500 acres of prime farmland? How much will this cost farmers?
- * What will be the impact of compacted soil during construction?
- * Determine how much precious topsoil will be moved and disrupted to build to grade and for all the highway flyovers and bridges?

9. AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE

- * What will be the impact on people and animals within 5 miles of the line due to the fumes from the construction of the rail line?
- * What will be impact on people and animals within 5 miles of the line due to the fumes from the ongoing train traffic?

10. NOISE and VIBRATION

- * There will be increased noise and vibration levels both day and night. What will be the social impact on residents within 5 miles of the track due sleep interruption and lack of sleep?
- * What will be the impact on children's ability to learn due to sleep interruption?
- * How will the sleep interruption affect worker productivity?
- * Decreasing "green areas" whether that be woods, corn fields or fence rows reduces the ability to deal with CO2 thereby contributing to Global Warming. How will this new rail line affect global warming?

11. ENERGY RESOURCES

- * How will the new rail line impact the existing underground gas, electric, sewer and water lines?
- * The Illinois Farm Bureau Legal Counsel states that 50 feet of easement for utilities is not legally possible. The STB should investigate the legality of this issue.

12. SOCIOECONOMIC

- * What will be the psychological impact, the stress, the loss of sleep and resulting effect on productivity for (1) the land owners whose family farm will be cut into pieces making it much more difficult to farm (2) the owners who will have the rail line within one mile of their home and (3) the owners who will have land that's been in their family for 50 years or more taken away by eminent domain?
- * How many truck drivers will lose their jobs as a result of lower freight costs and more goods being shipped on this new rail? What will be the negative impact on the local economy from this loss of jobs?
- * 24 acres per mile of railroad will be taken out of production forever, causing loss of farm income for current and all future farm owners. What will be the lost revenue to farmers over the next 50 years?
- * Decreased land values for surrounding properties resulting in a lower tax base and less real estate taxes. Estimate the decrease in land values within 5 miles either side of the track and determine how much tax revenue will be lost for the affected counties
- * There are risk factors associated with a privately funded company taking on this huge project. Require GLBR to have letters of credit from reputable financial institutions for 150% of the current estimated cost of \$8 Billion due to the fact that the project may not start for several years.

- * The STB should investigate the number of railroads that have committed to using the new line.
- * This is not a company with a proven track record building railroads. Investigate the background of all management personnel who will be responsible for the project.
- * What is the backup plan if GLBR runs out of money? Who will be responsible for the partially built track?
- * What happens if the company is not profitable?
- * Determine who will be responsible for future maintenance issues.

16. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

- * People live along the proposed rail line now because of the rural environment. Destroy that and people might be forced to move. What will be the social impact of uprooting families?
- * Township roads will be altered or closed. How will this impact the productivity of the affected residents?

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

A. Eminent Domain: The Notice of Intent states that one of the main reasons for the new line is to decrease the congestion in the Chicago terminal. It says delays “can be up to 30 Hours” and that “the new line can decrease this to 8 hours.” This new line merely allows the rail shippers to get their product to their destination quicker which results in more profit for the shipper, the railroads using the new line and GLB. Can the STB provide legal precedence for how eminent domain (described as the taking of private property for public use) has been used in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin to allow corporations to generate profits?

B. Public Convenience and Necessity: The Notice also states that “Section 10901 provides that the Board must approve a construction request unless it finds that the construction is “inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity.” This new line is not consistent with the public convenience as the STB heard at the scoping meetings. And it is not a public necessity because not many people are screaming about how necessary this is. And the Notice doesn’t say that the new line satisfies the public convenience or public necessity. This new line simply allows for profit companies to make more money.
The STB should deny this application outright.

Respectfully,

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