

Attn: Docket # FD 35952

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

July, 15, 2016

Dear Mr. Naveky:

As the STB studies the environmental and safety impacts of the Great Lakes Basin Railroad (GLBR), the high-speed freight rail project proposed by Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc., it is crucial to consider overall effects on public well-being and the environment, not merely the direct effects of constructing the railway, *per se*.

As a resident of the Village of Clinton, Rock County, Wisconsin – situated as it is near the proposed GLBR right of way – I am naturally concerned about the loss of farmland, safety issues related to the inevitable derailments, collisions with other vehicles, interference with emergency transportation and so on, but I am even more concerned about the broader impacts on Rock County, on the Upper Midwest and on the overall environment of the planet.

When one considers what types of rail cargo would benefit from being carried by unit (unswitched) trains on the GLBR's Chicago bypass, three of the major candidates are:

1. Fracking sand. Over the last decade, transporting frac sand has had a huge, disruptive impact on rail freight transport in the Upper Midwest, while sand mining in Wisconsin and Illinois has ramped up enormously. The GLBR bypass would facilitate the shipment of this sand to the eastern frack fields, further stimulating the sand mining and shipment. Its route also directly facilitates additional exploitation of the St. Peter silica sandstone located in Rock County, Wisconsin, as well as northern Illinois.
2. Oil produced from fracking. Petroleum production via fracking of North Dakota's Bakken shale fields has outstripped pipeline capacity. Transporting Bakken crude via the GLBR will facilitate increased fracking.
3. Crude oil produced from the Alberta tar sands. Given its link to the Canadian National railway, the GLBR provides a partial replacement for the Keystone XL pipeline that was rejected due to the environmental impacts of exploiting the Alberta tar sands.

These three things immediately suggests a number of questions about likely impacts, including:

1. How much farmland will be lost, in Rock County and elsewhere, due to increased frac sand mining?
2. What will be the *long-term* effects of such increased frac sand mining on the tax base, employment, and quality of life in the area?
3. What will be the environmental impacts of increased fracking, both near the fracking sites and globally due to greenhouse gas emission?
4. What will be the environmental impacts of increased exploitation of the Alberta tar sands, both near the fracking sites and globally due to greenhouse gas emission?
5. What will be the safety and environmental impacts of increased rail transport of crude?

I believe that such analyses will demonstrate that the GLBR is “inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity,” precluding its approval by the STB.

Sincerely,

Roy Bossingham