



KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

6100 Southport Road Portage, Indiana 46368

May 27, 2016

Mr. David Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001
Docket No. FD 35952

Dear Mr. Navecky:

The Kankakee River Basin Commission was created by the Indiana General Assembly in 1977. The Commission represents eight counties in Northern Indiana; Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Porter, Starke, and St. Joseph. The Commission is composed of 24 members: a representative from each of the eight Boards of County Commissioners, the eight county surveyors or their designated employee, and a supervisor of the eight Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The KRBC was established to coordinate development in the Basin and has, since established, sought to plan and coordinate the many environmental and economic demands placed upon the Kankakee River, its tributaries, and all the land around it. As indicated in our mission and vision statements, this includes flood control and drainage, as well as recreation, water quality and supply, hunting and fishing, wetlands preservation, and upland soil erosion. The Kankakee Basin in Indiana comprises 1.9 million acres of which almost 1.6 million is cropland.

The Kankakee River Basin Commission met on May 5, 2016 and a preliminary discussion was held about the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad. While there are few details for the Commission to study, the members did express some concerns and ask that I prepare these comments for you.

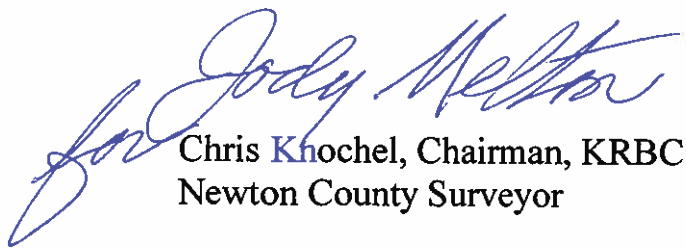
The greatest industry within the Kankakee River watershed in Indiana is agriculture. Most of the proposed rail line in Indiana would lie in the Kankakee River watershed. Surface and subsurface drainage is a major issue. The channelization and manmade drainage within the Basin is elaborate and fragile. Any disturbance of the surface flow may increase flooding unless there is adequate water storage compensation. The subsurface of the Basin is covered with tiles and that drainage will also need to be addressed. The KRBC is committed to farmland protection and would not be in favor of seeing farmland be disrupted or taken out of production.

There are many jurisdictional wetlands remaining within the Basin and they are protected from disturbance. The wetlands contribute to water management within the Basin and the proposed rail line will affect wetlands. Forests and wetlands provide habitat for much wildlife. The proposed railroad will disrupt this habitat.

Lastly, the second greatest problem in the Kankakee River Basin is sedimentation of the river channel. Stormwater runoff, erosion, and unstable soils are the major threat to the river and its ecosystem. All projects within the river basin will be measured by the effects they have on the existing ecosystem and the disturbances that could come from those projects. We are concerned about sediment erosion from this proposed railroad.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this proposal. We trust that you will weigh our concerns in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Khochel", is written over the typed name and title.

Chris Khochel, Chairman, KRBC
Newton County Surveyor



Kankakee River Basin Commission

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