

**MS. VICTORIA RUTSON
DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
FD-35952
395 E STREET SW
WASHINGTON DC 20423**

Dear Ms. Rutson,

I am writing to you in opposition of the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railway project. The proposed route for this private project will create numerous problems for the communities it will impact.

The route displayed in the maps presented with this project will impact the lives of more than just those landowners who will have their property taken. Agricultural fields will be severed leaving portions unable to access for crop production. Not only will this result in lost income, the unreachable land will not be able to maintained for weeds. Tile lines and waterways which have been put in place to conserve soil in the disrupted fields will be destroyed. These conservation practices have been put in place under the direction of the USDA Soil and Water Department and now, a project which is being privately funded by a yet to be named source and has no confirmed parties interested in using it, can come in and erase what farmers have worked years to put in place!

This being "farm country", there is a constant flow of farm equipment on the road for most all months of the year. These are large, slow moving machines that will need to travel on the few major roads with impatient drivers trying to get to where they are going. The increased traffic flow on these roads will leave little opportunity for passing but someone will try, resulting in serious or even fatal accidents. The equipment will take longer to cross the train tracks than a car which can be a dangerous situation with a fast moving train. We have no knowledge of what these trains would be transporting since there has been no information made public on this. A derailment or leak from the car could put the community in a hazardous situation or put the farmland out of production forever.

Another major concern is the closing of local roadways. With the few grade crossings proposed, the safety of the community is at stake. Ambulances and fire trucks who are responding to calls will have to travel a significant distance further due to secondary roads being closed. Many of the first responders in this area are Volunteer. This project will not only add to the time it takes to get to the site but for the emergency personnel to initially get to the fire truck or ambulance. With the unknown cargo these trains could be carrying, these people will also need to be trained on how to handle spills, leaks or other issues that arise from this being transported through our fields where food crops are grown, pastures where our livestock is grazing, and natural habitats of the wildlife that live in the woods. Contamination of the creeks and streams not only from leaks in the cargo but the fuel and oils that are used for the trains can severely harm the water source of livestock pastures and the natural fish and wildlife it comes in contact with.

The few proposed grade crossings on roads that will be made will receive substantial wear and tear from all of the traffic using these limited routes for their daily commute. These roads will be in a constant state of construction to make repairs at a tax burden to those communities. School bus routes will need to be added to get students to school with the increased travel distances due to closed roads. Districts will need to purchase additional buses at another added expense to taxpayers because of this “private project”.

In northern Illinois, the proximity of the proposed railway tracks and closed local roads with the Exelon Nuclear Station in Byron, IL raises concern. Yearly, we receive information as what we need to do should there be an emergency situation. By closing the secondary roads, the few that are open with grade crossings would be a traffic nightmare should an evacuation of the public be necessary.

I urge you to consider the impact of what this unnecessary “toll railway” will cause to the quality of life in the proposed area. None of the existing rail lines have shown interest in this project. There is no benefit to be had by this project. There is no guarantee of jobs or income from this project. Not only will the land where the tracks would be sitting would be disrupted, additional areas would need to be excavated to prepare the site causing wildlife displacement. The soil and rock to support the tracks will need to come from somewhere. Who is going to oversee this? We have farmed this land with the best stewardship practices to conserve the topsoil and slope of the ground. Now someone who has no background in building a railroad is going to head a project of the magnitude? Even if the tracks don’t cross the property I farm, what is done on the neighboring piece will impact my parcel. Waterways that once directed heavy rains could cause a completely different flow. Uncontrolled noxious weeds will flourish in land-locked areas. Cattle that are on pasture with connecting water sources could be affected by something that happens miles away. We would have no way of knowing until it is too late.

This project has no value to these communities. The possibility of short term jobs for a few won’t make up for the long term impact it will have on our natural resources. Please reject the Great Lakes Basin Railway project.

Ronda M Poliska
9634 E Lindenwood Road
Chana, IL 61016