

July 13, 2016

Dave Navecky, Surface Transportation Board
Docket# FD35952
Office of Environmental analysis
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Reference: Docket No. FD35952 Great Lakes Basin Transportation Corp., LLC Project

Dear Mr. Navecky,

I am writing to express opposition to the Great Lakes Basin Railway project proposed to run from Indiana, through Illinois and into Wisconsin.

After reviewing the GLBT website, the Surface Transportation Board's "charter", attending local area fact finding meetings and noting the lack of facts and at times the contradictory comments from the project's primary backer, I believe the STB's waiver of the required 6-month notification period was unjustly granted. Now when the time comes for the STB to make a go/no go decision on the future of the proposed GLBT, I strongly urge you and the other STB members to follow the will of the thousands of people who have written or e-filed comments opposing this railroad and deny this project. The voices of our local governments and individuals are united in opposition against this new railroad and abundantly clear. Deny this project! Any other decision MUST be unacceptable!

When you were in Rockford, Illinois, you and I spoke regarding reasons why this railroad project was not a viable option and should not be approved. Some of those reasons were:

1. Railroads require a level road and building up a granite bed will have an impact on the drainage and run-off basins of two major Rockford area rivers and numerous streams and creeks crossing the proposed rail line.
2. The proposed railroad bi-sects two landfills directly south of Rockford and as far as I know there has not been a geologic study to determine what impact up to 100+ trains/day traveling these rails would have on those landfills.
3. In one three-quarter mile section of the proposed railroad, 4 roads will be crossed. One of these is the main route traveled by commuters and emergency vehicles from outlying towns. The safety issue here potentially will affect emergency response time, commercial, residential and rural agriculture vehicles. The majority of commissioners and officials along the proposed GLBT route has expressed concerns regarding safety and agree this is not a viable project.
4. It is unnecessary to bring a spur south of and around Rockford, Illinois. Today WATCO has a small Intermodal yard directly south of Rockford connecting to major rail lines in Rochelle, Illinois and is not interested in partnering with GLBT.

5. GLBT's managing partner has stated the intent of GLBT is to relieve rail congestion in Chicago – this won't happen. The major railroad companies shipping through Chicago are already partnering under a program called "Create" to relieve shipping delays through Chicago and have invested millions of dollars to alleviate this problem. They've indicated they won't use GLBT and are not willing to pay a toll to use GLBT if it were available. GLBT simply shifts congestion to outlying areas where rail lines will have to interchange freight and cause new unexpected delays and safety concerns at those locations.
6. Since you were in Rockford, it has become known a primary reason for GLBT is to carry hazardous and highly flammable Bakken Crude Oil from the North Dakota and Canadian oil fields. There have been at least 14 oil train derailments from mid-2013 to today as well as one two years ago just outside of Rockford. Much more needs to be done regarding how to safely transport this highly hazardous material in tank cars before approving 278 miles of railroad as a hazardous material route.
7. There has not been a defined reason why 15,000 acres are required for a "rail yard" in the Kankakee area and asking for details results in "next question" as the answer. How can the STB not require details as to what is planned for this land? That's enough land for a rail yard and an air hub for freight and package carriers. Does the STB know what the "hidden" agenda is for these 15,000 acres?

Dave, there are many other reasons why the GLBT project is a non-starter some are: the negative impact on family farms, impact on nesting eagles and other wildlife along the rivers, that eminent domain should not be used by private investors to take our land, the impact upon a rural way of life for thousands of people and unnecessary loss of prime farm land, increased noise from 100+ trains and many more reasons.

In closing, I respectfully ask the STB to listen to the heartfelt requests that thousands of people are stating and that is: take whatever steps are required to deny and disapprove any petitions, submittals or proposals seeking authorization to move the GLBT forward - it is clearly an unwanted and unnecessary railroad project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,


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