

4/21/2016

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**PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
FOR THE EIS
ON THE GREAT LAKES BASIN RAIL LINE**

Pursuant to notice, this matter came on for public meeting at Seneca High School, 307 East Scott Street, Seneca, Illinois, on April 21, 2016 at approximately 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Mr. Dave Navecky, Surface Transportation Board,
Office of Environmental Analysis

Ms. Phillis Johnson-Ball, Surface Transportation
Board, Office of Environmental Analysis

Mr. Alan Summerville, ICF International

1 MR. GRAVES: Good evening and thank you
2 for joining us for this public scoping meeting
3 for the Great Lakes Basin Railroad Environmental
4 Impact Statement. This evening's meeting
5 includes two sessions.

6 First, will be a presentation and
7 second will be oral comments and I will give
8 some guidance when we get to the oral comment
9 portion of the meeting and, folks, I am going to
10 ask you all to move because that's where
11 speakers are going to sit as we move, so you'll
12 have to move out of there.

13 So at this time, I'd like to introduce
14 Mr. Dave Navecky with the Surface Transportation
15 Board, Office of Environmental Analysis.

16 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Good evening,
17 folks. Welcome to our public scoping meeting
18 for the Environmental Impact Statement on the
19 proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line. Next
20 slide, please.

21 Tonight we are going to go over a few
22 introductions to let you know who we are, then
23 we are going to discuss the Surface
24 Transportation Board, who we are as an agency

1 and what kind of process, what kind of review we
2 do in the environmental perspective. We are
3 then going to talk a little bit about the
4 purpose of the proposed rail line and discuss it
5 in general terms what's being proposed by the
6 Great Lakes Basin Transportation Group, and then
7 finally we'll end up with a discussion of a
8 couple of websites we have available for you to
9 keep informed about our environmental review
10 process and to communicate with us about the
11 project as well. Next slide, please.

12 Introduction. Thank you. Again, my
13 name is Dave Navecky. I am in the Office of the
14 Environmental Analysis, one of several offices
15 within the Surface Transportation Board. I am
16 the project lead or the project manager, if you
17 will, for our agency in the preparation of the
18 Environmental Impact Statement for this proposed
19 project.

20 Also here up on the stage is Phillis
21 Johnson-Ball. She is our Deputy Director of the
22 Office of the Environmental Analysis and also up
23 on the stage is a gentleman Alan Summerville.
24 He is with ICF International.

1 The Surface Transportation Board is a
2 small firm. We are only about 150 folks and we
3 have ten people on our environmental staff and
4 we don't have the capability to prepare a
5 document that is going to end up being produced
6 during this environmental review process. We
7 don't have all the specialists, air quality
8 engineers, the biologists, what have you, so we
9 need to use a consulting firm to help us in
10 preparing this document and in this case, it's
11 ICF International and Alan is the project
12 manager for ICF on our record. Next slide,
13 please.

14 The Surface Transportation Board, as I
15 have mentioned, is a small federal agency. We
16 are located in Washington, DC. We have
17 jurisdiction over the economic regulation of the
18 freight railroad industry. That jurisdiction
19 extends to the construction and operation of the
20 rail lines in the United States. So whenever a
21 railroad wants to construct an operating new
22 rail line, they need to get approval or a
23 license from our agency to do that.

24 When we get such a request, our agency

1 conducts two main reviews of the proposal. The
2 first review is why we are here tonight and
3 that's the environmental review of the proposed
4 project and the second review is a review based
5 on the transportation merits of the proposed
6 project.

7 After those reviews are completed, the
8 Agency will -- our Board members will then make
9 a final decision on the project and I'll come
10 back to that shortly. Next slide, please.

11 So the environmental review process,
12 scoping, the phrase basically called scoping is
13 the first step in the process. The purpose of
14 scoping is for us to identify the scope or the
15 content of the Environmental Impact Statement we
16 are going to study. We need to identify the
17 issues that need to be addressed in the
18 Environmental Impact Statement and scoping
19 assists us in identifying those issues because
20 we reach out during that process to federal,
21 state and local agencies who either have
22 jurisdiction or expertise either in the project
23 area or by regulation and we also reach out to
24 the public because you folks live here. You

1 guys know the issues, you are going to help us
2 define what we need to look at in our
3 Environmental Impact Statement.

4 And then we have been getting some very
5 good input and last week and this week on the
6 issues that we need to address, including
7 impacts to farming operations and drainage
8 tiles, impacts on getting around because of the
9 potential rail crossings whether it be delays
10 for yourself going to work or delays for your
11 kids going to school by a school bus or even
12 delays to emergency responders by our police --
13 fire and police and emergency response
14 providers. So those are some of the issues we
15 are have been hearing since we have been here.
16 Of course this is the end of the second week
17 now.

18 We are also interested in hearing
19 suggestions on alternative routes. Our
20 environmental review process requires that we
21 consider in our review a range of reasonable
22 alternatives, so on the table right now we have
23 the route that the Great Lakes Basin
24 Transportation Group has proposed, and we also

1 have the no action. That is also an
2 alternative. We are also required to look at a
3 range of already built alternatives.

4 So my office will be developing a list
5 of alternatives that will go into the draft EIS,
6 and we like to get input from you folks on what
7 those alternatives might be, some alternative
8 routes to avoid a certain community impact or
9 certain resource that we were not aware of or
10 that perhaps the Great Lakes Basin
11 Transportation Group wasn't aware of when they
12 put their route together.

13 We'd also be interested in hearing
14 comments on potential mitigation. If the
15 project were to go forward, what type of
16 mitigation would you like to see, mitigation
17 referring to measures or activities that would
18 either avoid or minimize the potential impacts.

19 We will then take all those comments
20 that you give us and we are going to get
21 hundreds, if not thousands, of comments and we
22 are going to go through all those and pull
23 together the scope of the document and identify
24 the alternatives that will be studied in our

1 Environmental Impact Statement, and we will put
2 those out for the public in a document referred
3 to as a final scope of study and if you are on
4 our notification list, you'll either receive
5 notification by E-mail or by regular mail,
6 whichever preference you express. You'll
7 receive notification from us that that final
8 scope of study is now available and we are
9 beginning the actual development of the draft
10 EIS. Next slide, please.

11 So the draft EIS. We finished the
12 final scope of study. We know what we are going
13 to look at. We know the alternatives we are
14 going to study and so we start preparing the
15 draft Environmental Impact Statement. That's
16 going to require us to collect a lot of data
17 from federal, state and local agencies. We are
18 going to have to collect ground data. We are
19 going to need to do some fieldwork to collect
20 data. We'll be doing some modeling work. For
21 example, we'll be collecting some fieldwork to
22 establish baseline noise conditions in the
23 vicinity of the alternatives, not just the
24 alternatives that the Great Lakes Basin

1 Transportation Group has come up with but we'll
2 be looking at all the alternatives. All the
3 alternatives are treated equally in our
4 environmental review process. There is no
5 preference given to the applicant's alternative.

6 So going back to that, we would do
7 field monitoring of existing noise conditions
8 and then we would go back and we would model
9 what the noise conditions could be if trains
10 were moving down those alternative corridors or
11 alternative routes. We will be looking at air
12 quality. We will be looking at land use
13 reference, water quality, transportation delays.
14 It's a fairly comprehensive list of topic areas
15 we'll be covering.

16 We'll also be developing preliminary
17 mitigation that we have identified through the
18 process based on the potential impacts we have
19 identified as well as the -- considering the
20 mitigation measures you may have suggested to us
21 during the scoping phase and we'll pull that
22 together and we'll issue a draft Environmental
23 Impact Statement.

24 It's going to be a lengthy document.

1 It will be hundreds of pages and a number of
2 appendices and we will again notify you when
3 that document is available and you'll receive a
4 notification either by E-mail or by regular mail
5 if you requested such notification.

6 It will be drafted where you can find
7 that draft EIS. It will be available up on the
8 website for you to review and we'll provide
9 copies of it to all the local libraries as well.

10 When we issue that draft EIS, we'll
11 establish a public comment period. A comment
12 period also applies to the public and all the
13 agencies, all the local, state and local
14 agencies are also encouraged to review and
15 comment on the document. And during that
16 comment period, we'll also come back out here to
17 the project area and have another series of
18 public meetings with you guys and the main
19 purpose of those meetings are by that time,
20 we'll be familiar with the project.

21 The main purpose of those meetings are
22 to hear oral comments that you may have on the
23 draft EIS. Either something we look at
24 carefully, you don't concur with the conclusion

1 we made or we missed something, whatever your
2 comments may be on that draft document.

3 After the close of the comment period
4 and after we have had all the public meetings,
5 we'll go back to the office and we will look at
6 all those comments and decide how to address --
7 we need to address all the comments that we
8 received in the final Environmental Impact
9 Statement, and that's going -- move on to the
10 next slide now.

11 Some of your comments may just require
12 us to provide a written response because perhaps
13 you just need to clarify an issue that wasn't
14 clear enough in the draft EIS or there is --
15 because of the size of the document, you were
16 unable to locate the information you are looking
17 for because it was in one of the appendices.
18 Some of your comments might require us to do
19 some additional analytical work or modeling,
20 some of it may require us to do some additional
21 fieldwork.

22 But at the completion of all that
23 process, we will then issue the final EIS and
24 then it will include responses to all those

1 comments and how we -- how we -- what our
2 response is to those comments and where you can
3 find your -- what I am trying to say, if we made
4 a change to the document, to the draft document
5 in response to their comment, you'll be directed
6 to the page in the document where you can find
7 those changes.

8 At the conclusion of that process, then
9 once we issue a final EIS, that concludes the
10 environmental review process for the Surface
11 Transportation Board. The document then along
12 with the draft EIS and all the public comments
13 are then made available to our Board. There are
14 currently three Board members, and they'll
15 consider them the entire environmental record
16 when they make their decision.

17 A couple of things I wanted to point
18 out about our final Environmental Impact
19 Statement is that it includes two
20 recommendations from my group, the Office of the
21 Environmental Analysis. We have a
22 recommendation of what the preferred alternative
23 is based on the potential environmental impacts
24 and we also have a recommendations on

1 mitigation. In a case as large as this, there
2 are many issues we need to address the
3 likelihood of hundreds of mitigation measures
4 that we recommend and basically we recommend to
5 the Board that if they choose to approve this
6 project, we recommend that they select our
7 preferred alternative and we recommend that they
8 impose the entire list of mitigation measures
9 that we developed and in most cases, if the
10 Board approves the project, they typically
11 concur with our recommendation and they oppose
12 the mitigation recommended and they inform the
13 applicant that if they want to move forward with
14 constructing and operating a rail line, they
15 have to construct and operate the preferred
16 alternative that we identify.

17 After, the Board will then take those
18 recommendations along with the results of the
19 review on the transportation merits which is
20 done by other folks within our agency and they
21 will consider that record, the review of the
22 transportation errors and the review of the
23 environmental impacts and they will then vote on
24 the project, and they -- the majority vote

1 carries the decision and that decision can
2 either be they deny the project, they can
3 approve the project or they can approve the
4 project with conditions including those
5 environmental mitigation measures I mentioned a
6 few moments ago.

7 That would conclude the Board's
8 process. If the Board were to approve the
9 project, then there are other federal agencies
10 that need to make decisions on this project.
11 For example, we know that the US Army Corps of
12 Engineers would need to make a decision related
13 to impacts to streams, streams and wetlands, the
14 US Coast Guard will likely issue a decision
15 related to a couple of the major river crossings
16 and the likelihood of the other federal agencies
17 that might have decisions made in this case that
18 will unfold as we go through the process. Next
19 slide, please.

20 The Applicant's Purpose and Need. We
21 have this labeled -- this slide labeled this way
22 specifically because the proposed project, the
23 proposed rail line, did not come from the
24 Surface Transportation Board. It's not our

1 idea. We did not identify a need for this
2 project. We did not specify the purpose of the
3 project. This project originated with the Great
4 Lakes Basin Transportation Group. So the
5 purpose of the need is to find as they have
6 provided to us and that includes that the
7 proposed rail line would provide Class 1
8 railroads, Class 1 railroads being the largest
9 railroads in the United States based on annual
10 revenue. For example, BNSF Railway and CSX
11 provide the Class 1 railroads and several
12 regional railroads with a bypass around the
13 congested rail network.

14 They also state that the proposed rail
15 line would add capacity to the regional rail
16 network in general and that would be able to
17 accommodate existing and future growth in the
18 greater Chicago rural area network. Next slide,
19 please.

20 The applicant's proposed action, the
21 proposed action being the proposed rail line.
22 Most of you are probably familiar with it by now
23 as they proposed it. It would be about 278 mile
24 rail line extending from southern Wisconsin down

1 through Illinois and then turning east and
2 ending in northwestern Indiana. It would
3 include a proposed rail yard or switching yard
4 near Manteno that would be used for switching
5 purposes and for maintenance of rural boxes so
6 locomotives and rail cars, both equipment run by
7 them and equipment run by their customers if
8 they wanted Great Lakes to provide that service.
9 Next slide, please.

10 And this is just the map that we have
11 in the brochure of the proposed rail line with
12 those bright green dots being the -- what they
13 have -- the Great Lakes folks have proposed as
14 interchange points with the Class 1 regional
15 railroads. Next slide, please.

16 Now, I wanted to go over the two
17 websites that are available to you to keep you
18 informed about our process and to -- we have two
19 websites set up to inform you about a process
20 and provide you resource and help you
21 participate in our process. This is our agency
22 website which is www.stb.dot.gov, that's on the
23 back page of our brochure.

24 On the agency website, you can file

1 your comments electronically. You can either
2 fill in a text box or you can attach your
3 comments -- attach a file to your comments
4 whether it's a Word file or a pdf or a jpeg,
5 whatever you'd like to do.

6 Our agency also tries to be transparent
7 in our process and all communication coming into
8 our agency and leaving our agency about this
9 project or any of our projects is posted on our
10 website. That includes letters and E-mails, so
11 if we write our letters to the Great Lakes Basin
12 Group and ask them information and they reply
13 back in writing, that's provided on our website.

14 All your scoping comments that we are
15 hoping to get from you during this scoping
16 period will all go up on website whether you
17 provided them by E-mailing or you mailed them in
18 US mail. Next slide, please.

19 This is a project website that we
20 launched to help keep you informed about our
21 environmental review process. We have some
22 information there about the background of the
23 project. We describe our environmental review
24 process. We have a bunch of maps on there you

1 might find useful including all the maps you saw
2 in the tables and in the cafeteria area.

3 We also have a file in there that you
4 can review the alignment, the applicant's
5 alignment using Google Earth if you are familiar
6 with that software.

7 You can also if you -- you or any of
8 your friends that were not able to come to the
9 meeting tonight and are interested in staying
10 informed, they can go into this website and sign
11 up to get on our notification list and one last
12 thing I wanted to point out is also if you have
13 friends and family or relatives, neighbors that
14 couldn't attend the meeting tonight, we are
15 having an online scoping meeting a week from
16 yesterday, April 27th. It will be a similar
17 format as this evening's meeting.

18 I will give the presentation to those
19 folks in a webinar format; and if folks want to
20 speak during that online scoping meeting like
21 what we'll do shortly, they need to register.
22 We need to have them register because somehow
23 they are able to pass the microphone to one
24 person to another on the webinar so we are not

1 all speaking over each other so if you think
2 anyone might be interested in that, I'd
3 encourage them to go to the website and sign up
4 for that.

5 And I think that's it for the
6 presentation. I'm going to turn it over to
7 Scott and he is going to go through the process
8 of coming up here for your oral comments. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. GRAVES: Thanks, Dave. So we are
11 going to begin the oral comment portion of
12 tonight's meeting and before we begin, I'd like
13 to provide just a little bit of guidance on how
14 we like to proceed and it to make things run as
15 smoothly as possible.

16 You'll see that we have a court
17 reporter up here. Her job is to transcribe
18 everything that we say at this meeting so there
19 is an accurate transcript. That will be posted
20 on the STB website. Accordingly, if you -- as
21 you are making your comments, if you don't want
22 personal information to appear in a public
23 document, please don't make personal information
24 in your comment.

1 Another thing -- a couple things that
2 will help the court reporter get an accurate
3 transcription is if you speak slowly and
4 clearly, and also if you could orientate
5 yourself towards at least so they can see your
6 face. She reads lips and it will be helpful for
7 her to get an accurate transcription.

8 When you come up to speak, we ask that
9 you state your first name and last name and
10 spell them both. That will also obviously
11 support an accurate transcription for your name.

12 Each speaker will have three minutes so
13 my recommendation is to make your most important
14 comments first and what will happen if you take
15 your full three minutes, you'll see a little
16 yellow sign that says 30 seconds and then when
17 your time is up, there will be a red card that
18 says stop. Just a little visual aid for
19 speakers. It's easy to when you are nervous in
20 speaking to lose track of time, so that's just a
21 little help there.

22 We have quite a number of folks who
23 signed up to speak tonight and in order to make
24 sure that everybody has a fair chance to make

1 their comments, we ask you to respect the
2 three-minute time allotment for each speaker.

3 And if you did not sign up to speak,
4 there will be an opportunity to come up. I'll
5 make time available at the end assuming that we
6 have time available in terms of the building
7 rental.

8 There are multiple opportunities to
9 make comments, I think Dave outlined a few of
10 those. There is a website for the Surface
11 Transportation Board and of course you can mail
12 in comments. After the meeting, Dave and
13 Phillis will be available to talk as well as our
14 staff to take comments. You can sit in front of
15 the court reporter and make an oral report at
16 that time as well.

17 And one final note is that this is a
18 meeting to receive oral comments from you, the
19 public, who are in this area affected by the
20 Great Lakes Basin Rail project and it's not a
21 question and answer period. We had time for
22 question and answer out before we came in and
23 then after the comments are done, there will be
24 additional time available to ask questions

1 individually.

2 And so what I'd like to do in terms of
3 getting the process going, I am going to call
4 four names to start and I am going to ask
5 everybody whose name I call to come on down.
6 There is a bench over here and a little chair
7 there and line up and that will help us
8 facilitate when I call the next person and to
9 give them time to come down while other people
10 are seated so that will make the process go a
11 little bit more smoothly, so I will call four
12 names, we will have the first speaker and after
13 that speaker, I'll call another name to take
14 their place, and we will just do that kind of
15 round robin until we are done.

16 So the first people I'd like to call is
17 Jan VonQualen, Bernadette Richter, Nancy
18 Djelland and Nancy Dillow.

19 JAN VON QUALEN: Good evening. My name
20 is Jan Von Qualen. That's V-O-N capital
21 Q-U-A-L-E-N. I am here tonight because of the
22 proposed track would run at a diagonal through
23 my farm cutting it in two.

24 I think it's important that GLB's cost

1 projections be thoroughly analyzed. The
2 proposed track would cut through my 40 acre
3 field at a 45-degree angle. With the 45-degree
4 angle, the rail crossing, the need for drainage
5 ditches and the replacement of tile, it's likely
6 that the track will be sold and the farm being
7 uneconomic to farm.

8 There is no other economic use for a
9 small piece of property out in the middle of
10 nowhere bisected by a railroad track. The cost
11 of the track crossing -- the cost of the track
12 crossing my farm will be the cost of the entire
13 40 acres.

14 My farm is at MP101 on the GLB map. In
15 the approximate three miles between MP99 and
16 102, I count 10 bisected fields resulting in 20
17 parcels needing ten private crossings wide
18 enough for farm vehicles. Using the railroad
19 crossing to access the field will take
20 additional time, fuel and wearing on the farming
21 equipment. Who will maintain the crossing?

22 Even in the best of condition, the
23 crossing presents a serious safety hazard. What
24 would be the cost to construct and maintain all

1 these private crossings? Is the GLB able to
2 finance the entire project? The benefits can
3 only outweigh the cost of the project if it's
4 completed. Costs are incurred upfront.
5 Benefits only come after completion.

6 The project should only begin if it can
7 be afforded to be completed. GLB is a new
8 single represented entity. Any claim that it
9 can single handedly finance and construct a
10 project of this scope has to be put to the test.

11 The Chicago Region Environmental and
12 Transportation Efficiency Program, CREATE, is an
13 alternative already in place to alleviate rail
14 congestion in the Chicago area. It's a
15 partnership between the United States DOT,
16 Illinois, Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the
17 freight railroads. To what extent does the GLB
18 project create a duplication of CREATE? Would
19 or could rail carriers pay adequate fees to
20 maintain the tracks and to provide return to GLB
21 on its investment?

22 GLB should then be required to
23 demonstrate the benefits that would result. Is
24 the track needed? Does GLB have any commitments

1 for railroads? How much railroad traffic?
2 GLB's success or failure will be as huge as the
3 project itself. I hope the Transportation Board
4 will closely review the project's costs and
5 benefits. Thank you for your time and
6 attention.

7 BERNADETTE RICHTER: Good evening. My
8 name is Bernadette Richter and I am executive
9 director of SOAR Illinois, Save our American
10 Raptors. For 30 years, we've provided medical
11 care and rehabilitation or sick, injured, and
12 orphaned birds of prey which includes eagles,
13 hawks, owls, falcons and others. In addition,
14 for 28 years, we've sponsored seminars for
15 others interested in raptor management and we
16 often host onsite education programs for scouts,
17 schools, 4-H, and others. We are federal and
18 state licensed falconers, rehabilitators,
19 educators, raptor banders, and breeders of
20 endangered species. We've also been actively
21 involved in many environmental issues, habitat
22 preservation and endangered species restoration
23 projects. To name a few...

24 We worked with the US Department of

1 Agriculture Nuisance Control at O'Hare
2 International Airport establishing their raptor
3 removal and relocation project to protect
4 aircraft and passenger safety.

5 We successfully bred endangered
6 Peregrine falcons, the poster bird for the
7 environmental movement, and donated them for
8 release across the country to reestablish the
9 species. Since 1985, we've been the primary
10 rehabilitation center for Chicago's Peregrines
11 when they need care.

12 We worked with the Illinois State
13 Interagency Committee, which included health,
14 natural history, natural resources,
15 environmental protection, geological survey, and
16 others, successfully spearheading a state and
17 national campaign to ban the avicide use of
18 Fenthion which killed many birds of prey,
19 including endangered species, when they consumed
20 target birds such as starlings and sparrows. We
21 helped developed alternative methods of bird
22 control for Fenthion users.

23 We worked with the State EPA, natural
24 resources, and other regulatory agencies,

1 alerting them to bird kills and injuries from
2 methane flame torches on landfills in the state.
3 As a result, many landfills are reclaiming their
4 gas.

5 We worked with Governor Quinn to save
6 Plum Island from marina and subdivision
7 development at Starved Rock State Park. The
8 island is wintering eagle habitat and Indian
9 burial ground. It is now preserved forever.

10 We worked with DuPage County Forest
11 Preserve to save 1700 acres of pristine prairie
12 land from stone quarrying and development, and
13 initiated the Citizen's Advisory Committee for
14 the Forest Preserve. The land was renamed
15 Springbrook Prairie Forest Preserve. We did all
16 this on a voluntary basis.

17 And now, we are here to save our
18 30-year passion, our raptor rehabilitation and
19 education center. Our bird medical clinic and
20 housing facility is located along the proposed
21 GLB route, approximately 800 feet from our
22 doors.

23 Given the physically sensitive nature
24 of birds of prey to toxins and noxious gases in

1 the environment, we are greatly concerned for
2 the health of our patients and our
3 non-releasable education birds. We relocated
4 from unincorporated Naperville to rural LaSalle
5 County 15 years ago for these same reasons.

6 The frequent ground to building
7 vibrations, similar to the rumble of mild
8 earthquakes, is also disruptive to the mental
9 and physical well-being of birds, as it is to
10 many other wild animals.

11 The noise from multiple and or/long
12 trains will impede our ability to teach our
13 seminars and host education programs onsite.
14 This will result in loss of income to support
15 our rehabilitation efforts.

16 Ponding or swamping of water due to
17 field drainage issues caused by track and
18 right-of-way in the crop fields surrounding us
19 will also encourage disease vectors like the
20 Culex and Aedes mosquitoes, which carry West
21 Nile virus, a brain encephalitis, which kills
22 birds.

23 My final comment is we ask the STB to
24 reject the Great Lakes Basin proposed Railroad.

1 In a footnote, I created the block GLB Facebook.

2 NANCY BJELLAND: Hi. Yes. My name is
3 Nancy Bjelland, B-J-E-L-L-A-N-D. And I was
4 asked by John Anthony the 75th District State
5 representative to read a letter that he has
6 written. Dear friends, thank you everyone who
7 has contacted me to share your concerns about
8 the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railway project.
9 I appreciate you taking the time to make your
10 voice heard. Your feedback has been
11 appreciated. I regret that I am unable to be
12 with you at the meeting tonight because I am in
13 Springfield today and tomorrow attending the
14 House of Representatives legislative session.

15 Let me make it clear first and foremost
16 that private property rights are a very
17 important issue to me. I am opposed to the use
18 of eminent domain to take away the land from
19 property owners, particularly our farmers.
20 Grundy County farmland is prime soil, among the
21 very best in the world. It can never be
22 replaced.

23 A few of the problems that may be
24 created if this project moves forward include

1 the closure of many rural roads making safe
2 travel to the fields take longer and more
3 expensive. Severed farm parcels that may be too
4 small to be farmed due to size or parcels left
5 landlocked; relocation of homes and/or farm
6 buildings; damages to or destruction of
7 wetlands, floodplain locations may be destroyed
8 or new ones created as well as surface drainage
9 and field tile drainage that may be lessened or
10 destroyed.

11 Other concerns include impact on
12 wildlife and public safety concerns with respect
13 to emergency response services and the risk of
14 derailment of tank cars with hazardous waste
15 spills which would contaminate surrounding
16 fields and possibly the aquifers below.

17 Please be assured I am not in support
18 of the railway project as it stands right now.
19 The proposal is still early in the process with
20 the most important aspect being community input
21 from local residents like you. My priority is
22 to ensure that every property owner who might be
23 affected has the opportunity to make their voice
24 heard. I will be a voice for you as well.

1 Finally, it should be emphasized that
2 Great Lakes Basin and Transportation, Inc. is a
3 corporate entity, not a state government
4 initiative. In recent weeks, the federal
5 Surface Transportation Board has conducted
6 public meetings throughout the region, seeking
7 local input. Next, the STB is expected to
8 completed an Environment Impact Statement, a
9 two- to three-year process and then decide if it
10 will approve or deny the project or change the
11 route.

12 Because this is a federal not a state
13 transportation project, I do not have a vote on
14 any step of the process. However, as your state
15 representative, I share your concerns and will
16 continue to make those concerns known to our
17 federal officials to ensure your voice is heard.
18 Sincerely John Anthony.

19 NANCY DILLOW: Good evening. I am
20 Nancy Dillow. N-A-N-C-Y D-I-L-L-O-W. I am the
21 superintendent at the Mazon-Verona-Kinsman
22 Elementary School District. I have provided a
23 map of our bus routes and within the map, we --
24 since we are unsure of the routes and roads that

1 will be closed, we went through the map and our
2 routes and marked off areas that we thought
3 probably will get for the road to be closed.

4 Along those lines if this railway comes
5 through, that will affect currently 160 plus
6 students that those are students that come to my
7 school and students that come to Seneca High
8 School. The problem is right now we currently
9 bus those kids an hour on each route every day.
10 If we have to make various changes, we can see
11 upwards of an hour and a half on a bus and that
12 is not safe for any kid. It's not safe for the
13 bus to be constantly turning around if you are
14 at a dead end road.

15 I did see your maps out in the or the
16 maps out in the comments area and, currently,
17 there is one road maybe in question that won't
18 either be a bypass or it won't actually have a
19 railroad crossing marked; but as I spoke with
20 someone earlier, that's just the preliminary.

21 The problem is after we speak and all
22 of this goes through the Surface Transportation
23 Board, the route can be changed. They could
24 decide to go ahead and close those roads and

1 that's why I wanted to go ahead and speak
2 tonight and get on the record.

3 Currently, the way it's planned with
4 all the other things that you'll be receiving,
5 those are bad enough but we do see a huge
6 problem for the safety of our students, putting
7 them on the buses longer and then with all the
8 additional traffic that will be created whenever
9 the farmers have to be moving their equipment
10 and guess when they are doing that, in the early
11 mornings when we are running buses.

12 Then we have the highway traffic with
13 the semis out on 47. There is too many small
14 lives at stake whenever we have to keep those
15 kids on buses longer. Thank you.

16 SCOTT WHITTINGTON: Hi. My name is
17 Scott Whittington. W-H-I-T-T-I-N-G-T-O-N. I
18 see a few big issues with the railroad just like
19 everybody else does. Noise pollution,
20 pollution, everything else.

21 One of the issues is Seneca Fire
22 Department handles I80 between the Seneca exit
23 over towards Marseilles and they will have to
24 cross a railroad track to get to the interstate

1 and that's an issue. The big problem I have is
2 we live -- we'll be within a half mile of this
3 so noise pollution will be very difficult. You
4 know, everybody likes to sleep with their
5 windows open.

6 But I take my grandkids down the road
7 whenever they come over, and we can go down the
8 road and see deer every day. You know, go close
9 tonight, you see deer and that's something
10 that's right where the railroad is going to come
11 through, and I am really worried about the
12 wildlife and the deer and everything right
13 through that area. That's all I got.

14 DEBBIE TERRAUT: Hi. My name is Debbie
15 Terraut. I have come here about the birds and
16 farmers and I am not -- I don't have a lot of
17 land. 20 years ago my husband and I were
18 raising two small children in Joliet and we
19 wanted to move to the country. We looked around
20 for a long time. We came to Morris and fell in
21 love with the people and the land and we bought
22 a property.

23 Now, I'm the proud grandmother of 11
24 grandkids and they love to come to the country.

1 They love to go down the street and learn about
2 respect for the deer, see the deer run in the
3 field, try to sneak up on them on a golf cart.

4 We have watched wild turkeys and they
5 learn -- they have been learning how to use
6 sealed glasses to find pheasants and they can
7 see the deer close but from far away. They just
8 said to me it has a great impact on their life
9 and I would hate to lose that; but also the
10 train will come between my house and my
11 neighbors who are I think a mile or around a
12 half a mile from us.

13 Every morning my husband and I sit on
14 our deck, watch the sun rise, talk about the
15 day, talk about the day, what we are going to do
16 for that day and I am very upset to lose that,
17 so thank you. That's all I have.

18 PAMELA ERICKSON: Hi. My name is
19 Pamela Erickson. P-A-M-E-L-A, Erickson,
20 E-R-I-C-K-S-O-N, and my brother Harry Erickson
21 and I are here against GLB Railroad proposal.
22 It runs through our generational farm and also
23 his other cash rented farmland.

24 The farmers are an example of living

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1 the American dream. This proposed GLB Railroad
2 will destroy the American dream for all of us.
3 My grandparents survived the depression and
4 worked and saved to buy the farm we live on. My
5 brother and I witnessed the struggles to operate
6 a farm and keep it in the family. Generational
7 farmers are the backbone of America. We put
8 blood, sweat, tears and sweat equity into our
9 generational farms for decades. Did the GLB
10 Railroad stop to think of how this proposed
11 railroad destroys our farmland values and future
12 income?

13 Using eminent domain is unjust and an
14 unfair business practice. The railroad will
15 make hundreds of millions, if not billions, of
16 dollars but only want to pay the farmer a
17 fraction of a true value and loss to the
18 farmers. And so many landlocked parcels can
19 only be farmed by crossing a railroad which has
20 happened on our farm and the railroad will
21 destroy tiles that connect to the drainage
22 ditches and other fields causing more flooding
23 fields and financial loss.

24 And the railroad will cut off -- we

1 have a farm that has a drainage ditch running to
2 it and all our neighbor farmers are using their
3 tiles to run through to connect to reach those
4 drainage ditches. The railroad will cut it
5 right in half.

6 Not only does this financially hurt the
7 farmland owners but also the cash renters'
8 income. What about the farmers who cash rent
9 the land which the GLB Railroad runs through and
10 the farmer's lost income and lost opportunities
11 for future income, who is going to pay for their
12 losses?

13 Farmers have been practicing good
14 environmental stewardship for centuries before
15 it became a movement. In 1978, radio
16 broadcaster Paul Harvey gave this famous speech
17 honoring the farmer. Of course all farmers in
18 here know that speech but obviously the person
19 that created this route knew nothing about
20 farmers, and they need to read this speech in
21 full online as I can't read it all, I don't have
22 enough time, but I am going to read a couple
23 paragraphs.

24 "And on the eighth day, God looked down

1 on his planned paradise and said, I need a
2 caretaker, so God made a farmer. God said, I
3 need somebody willing to get up before dawn,
4 milk the cows, work all day in the fields, milk
5 cows again, eat supper and then go to town and
6 stay past midnight at a meeting of the school
7 board, so God made a farmer. Somebody who'd
8 bale a family together with the soft strong
9 bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh,
10 and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son
11 says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad
12 does' so God made a farmer."

13 So I'd just ask the farmers let's stand
14 united in this protest in all counties, in all
15 states so that we can prevent this from
16 destroying our generational farms. God bless
17 the farmer and God bless America.

18 MR. GRAVES: Also, if you have prepared
19 remarks, it would help the court reporter if you
20 could leave them in front of her before you
21 leave up here just as a support to her
22 transcription.

23 ANDREA RACKMYER: My name is Andrea
24 Rackmyer. A-N-D-R-E-A, Rackmyer,

1 R-A-C-K-M-Y-E-R. I will gloss over all the
2 chemicals and all that stuff. We all know rail
3 yards 15,000 acres, 24 hours stadium type
4 lights, constant truck and train traffic, diesel
5 emissions, air and noise pollution, impact on
6 birds and bats other wildlife. Transport is a
7 major user of energy, burns most of the world's
8 petroleum, creates air pollution, nitrous oxides
9 and particulates and is a significant
10 contributor to global warming through CO2
11 emission. Some carbon calculations add 10
12 percent to the total trip distance to account
13 for detours, stop-overs and other issues. I am
14 going to gloss over the effects on the soil.
15 The farmers are going to cover that and the
16 surface water and the exhaust emissions. Okay.
17 Impact on safe environment. We have
18 railroad corridors that cause permanent damage
19 to soil and water with arsenic, creosote,
20 chromated copper arsenate, all of these are
21 toxic to wildlife, oil contaminated ground,
22 solvents, wood preservatives, scrap, wastewater,
23 chemical weed eradications fecal matter,
24 hazardous waste products, inflammable liquids,

1 fuels, toxic substances, corrosive substances,
2 explosive substances, waste oil from three
3 categories, okay, I'm not even going to go into.

4 Hundreds of school routes dead end in
5 areas where most kids are bussed, creating new
6 longer routes and leaving bus loads of students
7 sitting at dangerous crossings. Restriction of
8 great lengths of rural routes for first
9 responders, farm equipment forced out onto major
10 roadways increasing accidents, increased
11 derailments/explosions of hazardous/lethal
12 chemicals. Permanent damage to water and soil
13 and the agricultural industry.

14 Property values drop for all adjacent
15 landowners and farmers along the route, and
16 environment that is not really addressed is the
17 fearful environment that everyone in this room
18 across three states and 11 counties have had to
19 experience when they found out that Frank Patton
20 wanted to use quick take eminent domain.

21 These counties across three states were
22 blindsided by a railroad project counting quick
23 take eminent domain strictly for private gain.
24 Frank Patton and his investors spared no expense

1 or amount of time meeting with the marketing and
2 top officials rather than informing landowners
3 and farmers along the 278 mile route.

4 Thousands of landowners, farmers,
5 taxpayers affected by one individual's pipe
6 dream, sponsored by investor groups including
7 foreign interests hiding in the shadows using
8 threats of eminent domain to frighten and
9 intimidate. This is ludicrous and shameful that
10 thousands of hard working people are forced to
11 scramble to defend their property rights with
12 only a few days notice while our tax dollars are
13 being used to promote a project still going
14 through the siting process at the STB, marketing
15 that conveys endorsement, and I have provided
16 Mr. Navecky with those samples.

17 Disruption of a productive economic
18 agriculture environment. Agricultural land is
19 the most precious resource for our nation's food
20 production along with springs and waterways.
21 Both are nonrenewable. Agriculture and
22 ag-related industries contributed 835 billion to
23 the US economy in 2014. A 4.8 percent share.
24 American farms contributed 177.2 billion of that

1 sum. Overall contributions related to that,
2 forestry, fishing, related activities, food,
3 beverages, tobacco, textiles, apparel, leather
4 products, food service, food processing,
5 restaurants, drinking establishments that rely
6 on agriculture also contribute to the economy.

7 US ag exports in 2014 soared to a
8 record 152.5 billion up from 2013's record of
9 141 billion. Illinois agriculture contributes
10 about 120.9 billion, more than several other
11 industries, financial, transportation and
12 construction industries and provides over
13 400,000 jobs in Illinois alone.

14 Agriculture contributes to Illinois --
15 All right. We have been losing a bridge. You
16 want to take 30 to 60,000 acres out of the
17 agriculture industry. Many of these people have
18 put their blood, sweat and tears into this
19 project. Illinois has infrastructure projects
20 addressing the congestion in Chicago.

21 Logistically all promises Frank Patton
22 makes don't add up. We are well aware of the
23 economic productivity of our agriculture
24 community. Contrary to the assumptions about

1 people in this area, we don't live by the media
2 twist and spin. We prefer to base our decisions
3 based on facts.

4 We have done our research and we will
5 make sure that this process addresses all the
6 concerns of the communities. Thank you.

7 SUE REZIN: Good evening. I am Sue
8 Rezin, State senator of the 38 District. I
9 appreciate you allowing me to cut in front of
10 the line. I appreciate that. I just came in
11 from Springfield purposely for this meeting
12 tonight. I actually have to go back to
13 Springfield for a vote, but I thought it was
14 that important to come to this meeting.

15 As we talk about large projects, in my
16 district I represent an energy/agricultural
17 producing district. We have large projects,
18 large companies in this district but we also
19 have agriculture. A farmer is a business owner.
20 He provides jobs, creates jobs.

21 We constantly have projects that
22 because of logistically where we are located,
23 large projects that threaten to come through the
24 district. Even though we try to be open and see

1 if it's a value, at the end of the day what we
2 found in the past with these projects are and
3 especially for the farmers dealing with their
4 property rights that people come in and they
5 promise a lot of things with these large
6 projects.

7 So the farmers are promised a
8 tremendous amount of money per acreage or all of
9 these things but at the end of the day when
10 projects are cited, our concern is that
11 everything changes and then we are stuck with
12 picking up the pieces such as property rights
13 owned for the farmers are not addressed and
14 that's a huge concern especially when you are
15 talking to farmers or people living in the
16 country.

17 How are you compensated for compassion
18 rate? Anytime you have a large project going
19 through a farmland and their ground soil is dug
20 up, they lose value, they lose bushels per acre.
21 How are they compensated for that?

22 Smaller things, but very big items to
23 farmers, such as who is liable if somebody walks
24 on your property for the projects? How are

1 farmers notified when someone from the projects
2 is walking on your property or do they just get
3 to come on? How do you handle roads that are
4 now being or farms that are being cut in half
5 and cut off to roads. I mean, those are very
6 valid concerns for every single person in this
7 room.

8 This isn't the first time that we have
9 been together in terms of talking about a big
10 project coming through here and they have been
11 promising what other projects have in the past,
12 and I won't name names but there was a big DC
13 line trying to come in here, where we are
14 promised everything but at the end of the day
15 when it comes down to citing, when it comes down
16 to the actual project and the cost of the
17 project, it's the farmers and the local
18 officials and everybody here that's left picking
19 up the pieces because one farmer is pitted
20 against another one when they are offered money
21 for their property because we don't have the
22 answers to all the property rights issues that
23 farmers have which we should have. All of those
24 issues are very, very important.

1 I know you have people outside of this
2 door here outside of this door. We have asked
3 for an additional -- additional hearing to be
4 heard, same like this in Grundy County as well,
5 and we'll continue to follow through with that.
6 I know that you granted that in the past when we
7 have asked so we appreciate that. We have
8 officially asked for it. We would like another
9 citing here because there is so many people that
10 are just hearing about this project much like
11 myself.

12 The owner, the developer, contacted my
13 office years ago when this was to be part of the
14 Illiana project. The Illiana is dead so now the
15 project changes and I haven't heard from them at
16 all. This is the first that I am hearing in a
17 public hearing and I am not -- that's not a way
18 to site a major project going through districts
19 when everybody in the room including elected
20 officials are hearing for the first time.

21 So I ask you to slow office. And I ask
22 you to slow office project. We have many, many
23 answers -- or many, many questions for it, and
24 please listen to all of the property owners in

1 this room because they are business owners as
2 well. Thank you very much.

3 KATHY LOWERY: Hello. My name is Kathy
4 Lowery, L-O-W-E-R-Y and I am a farmer in Grundy
5 County. According to the maps that I have seen
6 about this project, one of the farms our family
7 is involved with will probably have what they
8 call a flyover. That flyover will sever
9 160-acre field and a half diagonally. That same
10 flyover will also impact our accessibility to
11 the fields at both ends.

12 One end is a township road that may
13 possibly be closed permanently. The other end
14 is State Route 47. That same flyover will also
15 cut through and crush the field tile during
16 railroad construction when thousands of dollars
17 have been spent by the landowner so there is
18 adequate drainage in his fields.

19 A portion of this farm is enrolled in
20 the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program. As I
21 understand the CRP contract, and I am quoting
22 here, No. 1, a CRP participant agrees not to
23 undertake any action on land under the
24 participant's control which tends to defeat the

1 purpose of its contract as determined by the
2 CCC.

3 No. 2, a participant agrees to control
4 the weeds, insects, pests and other undesirable
5 species to the extent necessary to assure that
6 the establishment and the maintenance of the
7 approved cover crop is adequately protected and
8 so on.

9 And No. 3, a participant agrees not to
10 disturb the acreage under contract during the
11 primary nesting and brood rearing season for
12 wildlife except as approved by the CCC. All
13 three of these points in the CRP contract would
14 be broken if a railroad line is allowed through
15 the farm. The noise pollution alone will
16 disturb the wildlife in the area and if the CRP
17 contract is broken by a participant, he or she
18 is to repay the CRP program payments they
19 receive plus interest.

20 Is the Great Lakes Basin Railroad going
21 to pay these penalties on the CRP broken
22 contracts? I doubt it. USDA's conservation
23 programs were intended to protect land and
24 waterways, not be destroyed by a railroad of

1 this magnitude. Thank you.

2 VICKI HEATH: My name is Vicki,
3 V-I-C-K-I. My last name is Heath, H-E-A-T-H.
4 And I am speaking on behalf of the LaSalle
5 County Soil and Water Conservation District. I
6 have been approached by many local farmers
7 within LaSalle County with concerns on the
8 proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail and utility
9 project.

10 Their concerns are pertaining to
11 subsurface drainage, natural surface drainage
12 patterns, conservation practices, splitting
13 farms, ag areas, wetlands and erosion issues in
14 general.

15 Subsurface drainage or tile is present
16 in nearly all of the fields in LaSalle County.
17 The tile systems that are present within the
18 fields will need to be found, rerouted and
19 maintain proper drainage for the fields to avoid
20 adverse impacts to the crop production due to
21 impaired drainage systems from railroad
22 construction activities. There are no official
23 maps of these tile lines since most of these
24 existing tile systems were not mapped when they

1 were put in decades ago.

2 Natural surface drainage may be an
3 issue when putting in the proposed rail line as
4 well. When the natural flow of water is stopped
5 or altered, problems will arise due to blocking
6 the current flow patterns or additional water
7 being directed into a watershed that cannot
8 receive the water previously.

9 Conservation practices that will be
10 affected in our county are grass waterways,
11 filter strip and grass rich terraces. These
12 practices assist with the natural surface runoff
13 on the farms. In LaSalle County, 85 percent of
14 our soils are classified as prime farmland by
15 the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The
16 proposed rail line splits some farms making it
17 difficult and in some cases not feasible to
18 farm. Without rail crossings and the split
19 fields farmers will have no entry to the land
20 lying on the other side of the tracks.

21 The parcels that are not accessible or
22 are too small to farm will have financial
23 impacts on the farming operation. Some
24 producers also utilize aerial spraying

1 applications or aerial applications for cover
2 crop planting. Splitting farms may create
3 problems with spraying pesticides or covered
4 crop seeding, making it more difficult and
5 costly.

6 Ag areas are another concern. They
7 were created for the purpose of protecting prime
8 and very productive farmland from development
9 and nonagricultural uses. The GLB route is
10 planned to be anywhere from a quarter mile to
11 just under one mile away from two of these areas
12 in our county.

13 Wetlands are also concerned with
14 theirs. Every step should be taken to avoid
15 these wetland areas and careful considerations
16 will need to be taken in these sensitive areas.
17 Erosion issues in general are a major concern.
18 As stated previously, our county, LaSalle
19 County, is 85 percent prime farmland. That's
20 over 617,000 acres of prime producing ground.

21 Environmental erosion and financial
22 impacts during and after the construction of
23 this rail line must be addressed. Thanks for
24 your time.

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1 ROBERT VARNES: I am Robert Varnes,
2 president of the Sheridan Community Fire
3 Protection District. With me tonight is a
4 fellow trustee Debra Augsburg and I'd like to
5 comment about the public safety. I'll leave the
6 merits of the railroad up to the rest of the
7 people here tonight.

8 We are a 26 member part-time volunteer
9 fire department and we run two ambulances a day.
10 We have 3600 residents to deal with. 2100 of
11 them are incarcerated in the prison and we have
12 to take care of them so we also take care of
13 Seneca Fire Protection District as far as their
14 ambulance services are concerned. There is
15 quite a area that we have to deal with,
16 135 square miles.

17 We are concerned about spillage. We
18 don't have facilities to take care of a major
19 spillage and we have -- we have not listed all
20 of it tonight but it includes oil, chlorine,
21 liquid hydrogen, propane, hydrogenous ammonia
22 and explosives. As the saying goes, if anything
23 could go wrong it will and I think we should be
24 concerned about that as you should be.

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1 I had a nice presentation prepared
2 tonight based on an hour and a half presentation
3 that Frank Patton and his group made to the
4 University of Illinois graduate students in
5 December, and based upon that, I thought I had
6 done a pretty good job in that he had a Class 1
7 railroad, he had the fantastic bridges that are
8 going up to prevent spills into the rivers. He
9 is going to separate the rail traffic and we
10 were going to be very proud. He was going to
11 leave himself a legacy. Well, tonight I got a
12 shock.

13 There is crossings at practically every
14 intersection that concerns me. Sheridan has one
15 road going east and west and another that goes
16 north and south. That's it to Sheridan. If you
17 block any of those roads for ambulances, we have
18 a time delay getting people to a hospital or
19 respond with a wreck on Highway 52 especially,
20 so I thought maybe we'd have at least an
21 overpass going into Sheridan which I would
22 insist upon; otherwise, we are going to have
23 tremendous delays of 110 trains zooming by there
24 a day, up to 150 I hear some people say.

1 So that would be my first
2 recommendation is that we have at least a
3 flyover if you call it for trains over the
4 automobiles but we need a bridge there.

5 Secondly, we need to provide access to
6 all the road areas. If we cut them off, our
7 time for response is reduced significantly. So
8 I see that they do have crossings on there. I
9 don't know if they are going to maintain those
10 crossings, but if they do have them, at least
11 they'll have one of our concerns.

12 And thirdly, we don't have the
13 facilities to -- for a major spill in the Fox
14 River. That's -- If we have a spill like that,
15 it's going to take hours for anybody to get
16 there. By the way, if we had to evacuate the
17 prison, it would take 42 buses plus chase cars
18 and it would take maybe hours to get them there
19 so these are people who are incarcerated and for
20 serious chlorine spill or any other dangerous
21 toxin material, it's practically impossible to
22 get them out safely. Thanks a lot.

23 CAROL SMITH: My name is Carol,
24 C-A-R-O-L, Smith, S-M-I-T-H. Good evening. Our

1 prime farmland is how we make our living. My
2 husband has worked hard growing corn, soybeans,
3 sweet corn and beef. We pay our taxes
4 faithfully and we take pains to live clean
5 honest lives on my family's land which was
6 designated a generation ago in our neighborhood
7 as Ag Acres.

8 Endangered eagles nest peacefully in
9 our timber but they as well will no longer live
10 healthfully if subjected to the disruption which
11 will certainly be inevitable should the proposed
12 Great Lakes Basin Railroad project become an
13 irresponsible morbid reality.

14 We do not want our updated field tiles
15 and fields split or crushed, marshlands
16 emerging, roads closing, trains derailling, and
17 polluting, accidents increasing, land values
18 plummeting and more. We do not need to pay any
19 more taxes, fees, et cetera, that would surely
20 chase Mr. Frank Patton's miserable pipe dream
21 and head our way so that this opportunist can
22 leave his family a legacy at our expense.

23 Now I ask you, what sort of legacy
24 would we be then leaving our fourth and fifth

1 generations? A project such as Mr. Frank
2 Patton's Great Lakes Basin Railroad proposal is
3 not needed. It will not eliminate Chicago
4 congestion. It will push it's problems further
5 west and stop. Any jobs created would be taken
6 by out of staters, so the battle cries of
7 unemployment and state debt will not be quiet.
8 This railroad proposal is not needed.

9 What we do need is mild weather, timely
10 rainfall, the best seed, chemicals and
11 fertilizers, luck and of course the ability to
12 appreciate lots of uncompromised prime farmland.
13 Thank you.

14 ROGER SMITH: Robert Smith. R-O-G-E-R
15 S-M-I-T-H. I consider this proposal a complete
16 misuse of eminent domain and simply an attempt
17 by a group of investors to trample on property
18 owner's rights.

19 I am especially concerned about noise
20 pollution, air pollution, hazardous materials,
21 being transported. The reimbursement for land
22 taken doesn't begin to cover the cost to the
23 farmer. The farmer is going to lose money long
24 after being reimbursed for any land taken.

1 Not all my neighbors are farmers. Some
2 of the neighbors came out from the suburbs and
3 from Chicago to build homes and raise a family,
4 just to get away from that type of congestion.
5 Now they are looking at a possible train rolling
6 across their back door. The type of traffic
7 being described in this proposed is I believe
8 extremely dangerous not only to our young
9 drivers but to our students being transported on
10 buses.

11 This proposal does not eliminate
12 congestion, it just brings the congestion to our
13 neighborhood, and it will only get worse if time
14 passes. The proposal does not solve any
15 problem. I am concerned about the lack of
16 information about the investors, for Great Lakes
17 Basin Railway. Who are these people? Why don't
18 they want to tell their name -- why don't they
19 want their names made public? Are there foreign
20 governments involved in this investment?

21 The open range closed long ago. All
22 the property, farm property, is a major
23 investment. Major improvements have been made
24 to the land. This proposal just tears all that

1 apart. This is nothing but a land grab in my
2 opinion by a group of investors that don't want
3 their names known.

4 Once taken, this prime farmland, some
5 of the best farmland not just in the state, the
6 country but the world, it will be gone forever
7 and it you'll never get it back.

8 JEFF LANDERS: Hi. My name is Jeff
9 Landers. J-E-F-F L-A-N-D-E-R-S. As a
10 professional educator for the past 11 years, I
11 think it's important to educate you how this
12 project the Great Lakes Basin Transportation
13 line affects our area. Our agricultural
14 industry is our largest economy in our area, the
15 State of Illinois and in the country. We are
16 the envy of the world because of our
17 agricultural system and this project plans to
18 hinder our agricultural system.

19 This is a secretive project so many
20 people are hearing about for the first time
21 tonight. It is a project that affects
22 landowners' rights through the use -- potential
23 use of eminent domain. It will disrupt
24 thousands of agricultural businesses across its

1 path. The project says that it will alleviate
2 burdens for rail companies but will create
3 burdens for those thousands of agricultural
4 businesses.

5 The project brings drainage issues.
6 Many of our watersheds will be disrupted by this
7 project, many of which will never be able to be
8 repaired. It will alter woodland areas and the
9 creeks and create problems with our wildlife.
10 The project house will short term jobs that will
11 affect the long term jobs in the agriculture
12 industry.

13 Safety is also a concern creating
14 collisions from 110 train cars or trains that
15 pass through our area every day and will put
16 great burdens upon our emergency responders.
17 For many people in this room, their farms is
18 their legacy, it's their livelihood, it's
19 everything that their family has and for a group
20 of private investors to be able to take that
21 away goes against our American dream. Thank
22 you.

23 MARY WHIPPLE: Mary Whipple. Mary,
24 W-H-I-P-P-L-E. My name is Mary Whipple. I was

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1 born in LaSalle County. I have lived in Utica
2 for 41 years, in rural Utica. My husband and I
3 farm in Rutland Township. I am a member of
4 COES, Conserve Our Ecosystem, a nonprofit group
5 working to conserve and preserve ecosystem of
6 rural communities. I have worked with farmers
7 in Rutland Township to defend our prime farmland
8 from the rapid growth of the frack sand
9 industry. Tonight I will share my main
10 environmental concern for LaSalle County
11 citizens should the Great Lake Basins Rail
12 become reality and that is the transport of
13 crude oil by rail.

14 Last December congress lifted a 40-year
15 ban on crude oil exports. Ron Ness, president
16 of the North Dakota Petroleum Council said it's
17 a big deal. Once you get a barrel to sea, it
18 will fetch a better price. The whole world is a
19 market now he said. So I ask you how do you get
20 a barrel of oil to sea?

21 This week on Wednesday, 175,000 barrels
22 of North Dakota crude was offloaded in Europe.
23 The crude originated in Tioga, North Dakota was
24 shipped by rail to St. James, Louisiana then

1 loaded onto tanker bound for the Netherlands.

2 In Chicago where about 40,000 rail cars
3 pass daily, transporting crude oil by rail has
4 faced intense public scrutiny. The founder of
5 the Great Lakes Basin Rail, Frank Patton, thinks
6 he has found a solution.

7 In a March 2014 article for Energy
8 Wire, Patton proposes a bypass that will take
9 crude oil around Chicago while keeping
10 potentially hazardous oil train traffic away
11 from the most densely populated areas. In that
12 same article Patton says all you had to do was
13 look at the map. Patton's map routes crude oil
14 on the Great Lakes Basin Rail through LaSalle
15 County and east of Grundy County. So Patton's
16 route will not resolve all the issues concerning
17 the safety of crude by rail. He said the
18 current route doesn't lead to us near any
19 population centers and I disagree.

20 LaSalle County doesn't have the
21 population density of Cook County, but real live
22 people live in our towns, in our villages and
23 our farms. Our citizens have the same
24 environmental concerns the folks in Chicago have

1 about transporting crude oil by rail through
2 their communities.

3 Lifting the crude oil export ban means
4 more US oil will get shipped overseas. How all
5 that oil gets to the gulf is the question. Mr.
6 Patton thinks routing crude oil through LaSalle
7 County's rural communities is a good idea. He
8 says the Great Lakes Basin Rail this is the
9 legacy for myself and my children but is this
10 railroad what the citizens of LaSalle County
11 wish to leave to their children and
12 grandchildren? I think not. Thank you.

13 APRIL GERSTUNG: My name is
14 April Gerstung. A-P-R-I-L G-E-R-S-T-U-N-G.
15 Chief Shabbona's 20-acre reservation lies in
16 Norman Township and it has a proposed train
17 track running right through it.

18 The native American Indian's property
19 is in the east half of the southeast fractional
20 corridor of Section 20, Township 33, north of
21 the baseline in range six, east of the third
22 principal meridian, on the south end of the
23 Illinois River between Morris and Seneca in
24 Norman Township of Grundy County, Illinois.

1 On June 27, 1854, the property was
2 purchased from Shawn and Sara Bachelor and
3 county clerk Perry Armstrong, friends of
4 Shabbona, omitted this property from the tax
5 books and it was deeded to Chief Shabbona and
6 all his heirs tax free for eternity.

7 The handwritten deed recorded in
8 September of 1854 along with the current tax
9 information which contains the PIN number, the
10 legal description, they are included with this
11 letter.

12 Also included is Page 34 from the 2015
13 plat book of Grundy County, Illinois sponsored
14 by the Grundy County Farm Bureau that shows
15 Shabbona Reservation. Because of the new plat
16 book celebrates 100 years since it's first
17 printing, the legacy additional also shows the
18 ownership of land from the 2005 plat book and
19 Shabbona's Reservation is again in evidence.

20 Chief Shabbona became a legendary
21 friend of this area's pioneers and for many of
22 us today we still honor him for the man that he
23 was. I can't see how one thing is such a good
24 idea to take land from someone else just because

1 they want it and I really don't think it's a
2 good idea to take land from a native American
3 Indian and one who actually created a legacy for
4 generations to be proud.

5 MONTY WHIPPLE: My name is Monty
6 M-O-N-T-Y W-H-I-P-P-L-E. I am president of the
7 LaSalle County Farm Bureau. Our organization
8 has spent time researching and discussing the
9 Great Lakes Basin project and last week the
10 Board of Directors voted unanimously to oppose
11 this project at this time due to the
12 environmental impact.

13 LaSalle County has over 600,000 acres
14 of prime agricultural land. This GLB Rail
15 project will remove roughly 730 acres of this
16 ground but environmentally this project will
17 affect a much larger area based upon the total
18 disruption caused by possibly 100 plus trains a
19 day passing through this rather pristine, quiet
20 rural area that we like to call our homes.

21 High noise levels, road and traffic
22 disruptions more difficult and less efficient
23 farming operations are just a few of the common
24 concerns. LaSalle County Farm Bureau feels that

1 each county should be notified of the total
2 impact of this project such as environmental
3 impact -- environmental impacts regarding
4 drainage and waterway issues that have already
5 been discussed here, also about the impact of
6 the clean up from oil spills from possible
7 derailments of these cars carrying huge amounts
8 of oil at high rates of speed.

9 Public health and safety are a top
10 priority for our community and by the way,
11 LaSalle County is already a major beneficiary of
12 rail transportation. The volume of train
13 traffic and disruption in this county is already
14 high and the volume of abandoned rails lines is
15 also rather high.

16 LaSalle County Farm Bureau requests
17 that the Surface Transportation Board conduct a
18 full review of the transportation merits of this
19 planned project because this will be the largest
20 new railroad in 125 years. The current route is
21 280 miles long and most of it cuts through
22 highly productive farm ground.

23 We request that the STB certainly not
24 approve the 50-foot corridor for possible future

1 use by utilities. Railroads don't need a
2 utility corridor to support their railroad
3 operations and the STB doesn't have their
4 authority to approve transmission projects,
5 natural gas pipelines, fiber optics or anything
6 else the GLB can envision that doesn't involve
7 the freight railway.

8 We believe that it is unconstitutional
9 for a private company to take our land for a
10 railroad and then turn around and sell it off or
11 grant easements for uses which have nothing to
12 do with the railroad. We request that the STB
13 deny the GLB railroad an exemption from this
14 review and exclude any nonrailway uses from its
15 consideration of this project.

16 Should the GLB request authority to
17 exercise eminent domain, LaSalle County Farm
18 Bureau will strongly oppose any such request.
19 Thank you.

20 KEN NELSON: Hello. I am Ken Nelson.
21 I am a band member and junior at Newark High
22 School. I currently help my parents on our
23 grain and livestock operation and like to farm
24 in my future. This proposed railroad where our

1 family farming operation it goes through three
2 farms and my parents' farm including our home
3 operation. It's really damaging by cutting
4 through waterways and tile that drain our land.
5 It would also impact our community by going
6 close to our church and close to our home.

7 The proposal plans to close our local
8 road systems and put scattered crossings on
9 roads near us. This will cause travel distances
10 to increase due to the limited crossings that
11 will impact my travel to school as well commute
12 for our farming operation.

13 It is my hope that during this scoping
14 process that you will realize this proposal
15 harms people, the environment and our land that
16 has been farmed for generations. Please help me
17 have a future in agriculture by saying no this
18 proposal for the good of our community and my
19 family. Thank you.

20 BRAD MALE: Brad Male, B-R-A-D, M-A-L-E
21 and I am from Gardner, Illinois. Eminent domain
22 is a very serious matter. We are taking
23 peoples' homes, we are taking peoples' property
24 and if we are going to do that we need to make

1 sure that people are held accountable and if a
2 transportation company is trying to be granted
3 eminent domain then the public should be rightly
4 informed and the fact that the GLB has not made
5 the case to the public or to the STB in my
6 opinion from the information that I have
7 received. The information is not out there.

8 Who is responsible for the rail issues,
9 clean up issues, quality of crossways? How will
10 this benefit the public? Have they not
11 contacted local officials, County Board members,
12 people like that? This is one issue out of many
13 that is why this isn't going to work for the
14 communities, and the simple fact that they have
15 put this -- the simple fact that the
16 transportation company has put public and the
17 STB in this predicament should be evidence alone
18 that it won't work, it should not go forward.
19 Thank you.

20 PHILIP NELSON: Philip Nelson,
21 P-H-I-L-I-P N-E-L-S-O-N. I am Philip Nelson a
22 fourth generation farmer and our family farms
23 just north of Seneca. Growing up on a farm and
24 being influenced by our parents and

1 grandparents, they instilled to me that our
2 responsibility in life was to leave our farming
3 operation better than what we started with. I
4 can tell you without a doubt if you grant the
5 GLB the approval to construct this railroad, it
6 will destroy that ability. This proposal
7 impacts us in many ways.

8 As a property owner, it cuts through
9 the middle of one of our farms. It would
10 destroy the drainage tile, numerous waterways
11 that we have worked built over the years and
12 some of those are in ten-year contracts that has
13 been alluded to before. Let alone the
14 difficulty task to grow crops in such a damaged
15 parcel of land.

16 The second farm carves the corner of a
17 soon to be sentinel farm and it would destroy a
18 large drainage waterway that begins the forming
19 of the Nettle Creek. That area cut off would,
20 again, be impossible to farm. The third farm
21 that would be harmed is our cousins' farm. They
22 are here tonight opposing this proposal as well.

23 That track would cut on an angle of
24 their 160-acre family farm, destroying the

1 substantial waterway and a drainage tile system.
2 A lot of us has taken considerable time looking
3 at this proposal. It doesn't make sense.

4 I urge you No. 1, as a committee to
5 conduct a full review of this proposal and grant
6 no exemptions. No. 2, I want all of you to
7 examine the findings and the proposals of CREATE
8 21. They are addressing the concerns in the
9 bottlenecks to the Chicagoland area and doing it
10 in a manner far less intrusive and productive
11 than this proposal.

12 No. 3, GLB is not an existing railroad
13 company and, in fact, it's a startup investment
14 group with no freight rail experience. Thus,
15 they should never be allowed the status of
16 eminent domain. No. 4, at the present time no
17 railroads have expressed interest in using this
18 proposed railroad. In fact, Union Pacific has
19 made it public that they will not use this rail.
20 And fifth last but not least, this proposal
21 would devastate our rural communities.

22 It has been said by the proponents that
23 this route will not disrupt metropolitan areas.
24 We may not be the large metropolitan area but we

1 do count in rural Illinois. The proposed
2 railroad track is very near to our church, near
3 to our home, let alone the crossings and the
4 closures of roads that will disrupt our
5 community for the future, our ambulance
6 districts and our fire protection services. For
7 all of these reasons, I hope you have heard the
8 human cry at all of these hearings to apply
9 commonsense and not approve this project so I
10 can look our kids in the face and say that we
11 have left our farms in better hands for future
12 generations. Thank you.

13 PHILIP BURKHART: Philip Burkhardt with
14 one L, B-U-R-K-H-A-R-T. The traditional impact
15 category has been well covered dealing with land
16 use and noise and environmental matters. I
17 would suggest, one, that you consider that being
18 environmental Justice.

19 That might seem a little peculiar, but
20 I would submit to you that there is an
21 alternative one with the Surface Transportation
22 Board is aware of having approved the EJ&E
23 Railroad acquisition by Canadian National in
24 2009 for the purpose of routing traffic around

1 Chicago.

2 And as you look into that, particularly
3 entering this environmental justice category, we
4 may not be traditional minorities here or we may
5 not be low income but compared to let's say
6 Barrington, where the EJ&E passes through we
7 certainly are. Those communities have purchased
8 sound wall in anticipation of the rail traffic
9 passing through those areas. It would seem that
10 you also should consider the dynamics of
11 Illinois if you are not familiar with them.

12 The big player in Illinois is the
13 Chicago area. After that, it's downstate and
14 this room is full of those little guys that make
15 up downstate Illinois. We count on people like
16 you to take that into consideration. We do not
17 have any clout. We do not -- we are often run
18 roughshod over by the interests of our big
19 neighbor to the northeast of us.

20 What can happen here in particularly I
21 challenge you to consider GLBT's stated purpose,
22 their purpose as I have heard mentioned earlier
23 is for their investors to make money. We have
24 heard that others really don't want to choose to

1 use the operation. It reminds me of the days of
2 the railroad robber barons when things could be
3 run roughshod over and again, we like you to
4 consider -- I would like you to consider
5 although it may not be a traditional category
6 this matter of justice for those of us who are
7 not the big clout players in this community.

8 I see I still have a little time left.
9 I have 30 seconds I will address one other item
10 that's a little offbeat, too, and that's the
11 settings. We may not have purple mountains
12 majesty but we do have amber waving fields of
13 grain and we also have fruited plains and I
14 think about particularly in this area one thing
15 that we do have is the Illinois River valley is
16 something that's very scenic and attractive for
17 us and I have never seen an attractive railroad
18 bridge. It is going to be ugly and
19 particularly -- particularly when it has to
20 cross Route 80 and they are going to have bridge
21 approaches that are 1 percent grades and those
22 bridge approaches are going to be long and high
23 and visually a tremendous eyesore.

24 You folks have a tough task ahead of

1 you, but we depend upon you to protect us, the
2 little guys. Thank you.

3 DOUGLAS STOCKLEY: Douglas Stockley,
4 S-T-O-C-K-L-E-Y. I am here two-fold. One I am
5 on the Farming Board for LaSalle County which as
6 you heard earlier has taken a negative position.
7 The area of the county I serve LaSalle County is
8 it directly impacted the townships that I
9 represent.

10 The second reason family farm that I
11 grew up on is within feet from the rail passing
12 in that 140 mile marker. My comments will
13 concentrate on impacts to LaSalle County.
14 Mostly what's missing or incorrect from the map
15 near.

16 It passes two rural churches not in the
17 area, creek crossings not in their area, total
18 four drainage ditches, there is at least not
19 mentioned, engineered waterways and terraces are
20 not mentioned at all. Beginning where the rail
21 enters the county, in the southeast portion, it
22 states no wetlands, wooded areas or waterways
23 are affected.

24 The rail project first crosses Mission

1 Creek, it does that a total of two times. It
2 also crosses at least seven engineered
3 waterways. Approximately 50 percent of soils
4 within this first ten-mile segment have
5 hydrologic characteristics that show improved
6 water infiltration when drainage is managed.
7 This rail project will negatively impact the
8 engineering farm drainage system in all project
9 segments running through LaSalle County.

10 There is also a large wooded area that
11 was not mentioned. It's approximately one
12 quarter section, hundreds of acres returned
13 surrounding Mission Creek crossing that will
14 necessitate removal of many trees. There is a
15 segment mile markers 130 through 140 request
16 Seneca Township Road, east 20, this rail project
17 severs multiple farm parcels along this road,
18 therefore, severing it will create adverse
19 travel to the farm owners and operators in this
20 area.

21 The narrative states that the project
22 will cross County Road 23, it should be US
23 Highway 23 with an overpass. Not mentioned in
24 this same location of the project will also

1 cross County Highway 22 at-grade. This ten-mile
2 project section crosses three county roads
3 at-grade. LaSalle County is the second largest
4 Illinois County in the area. Emergency services
5 response times are already impacted by the large
6 areas that they serve without waiting for rail
7 traffic.

8 Approaching Fox River proposed project
9 cuts through seven engineered field terraces,
10 also not mentioned, and the little Indian Creek.
11 I will conclude with my comments with talking
12 about its passage over Fox River.

13 The Fox River at its proposed point of
14 crossing has formed the River Valley. There is
15 a timber occurring buffer on both sides that
16 would have to be cut. Soil slope
17 classifications range from 30 to 60 on the west
18 that's percent slope on the west side and 0 to
19 12 percent on the east side and it would require
20 erosion control mitigation.

21 The narrative notes that water may be
22 present in the fields after heavy rainfalls.
23 This is true along the entire route of LaSalle
24 County and not only this location. Land is

1 currently being row cropped right up to the --
2 right recurring buffer at all the river and
3 creek crossings and so it's going to be very
4 sensitive to anything that would impact the
5 range. Thank you.

6 RICHARD JOYCE: Good evening. I am
7 Richard Joyce. R-I-C-H-A-R-D, J-O-Y-C-E. I am
8 I am a lifelong resident of Grundy County. I
9 have been a member of the Grundy County Board
10 for more than 31 years. I have three short
11 comments.

12 First I find it highly unusual that a
13 project of this magnitude that this company has
14 not approached local officials. When people
15 call me, I don't know what to say. I have heard
16 one side of the story tonight. I haven't heard
17 their story. I find that very unusual and it
18 makes me very skeptical of this project.

19 Second, the proposed railway may cross
20 former underground coal shaft mines. Even
21 though some of these mines have been closed for
22 over a hundred years, there is still something
23 that called subsidance that affects homeowners
24 and farmers. Farmers call them sinkholes. I

1 think this is a potential safety issue. If a
2 tractor could go through a sinkhole, what
3 happens with a train?

4 Third, I'm concerned that if the rail
5 project causes a decline in local property
6 values of homes and other rural property. The
7 tax base of local government districts will be
8 negatively affected, townships, counties, school
9 district, fire protection districts, library
10 districts, et cetera. Thank you.

11 SCOTT THORSEN: Hi. My name is Scott
12 Thorsen, T-H-O-R-S-E-N. The first point I'd
13 like to talk about is true use. Like another
14 said I believe look at real world, worst case
15 scenarios. If this line is really going to
16 enhance oil flow to the east coast, we really
17 need to look at it as worst case scenarios that
18 could happen.

19 Another example is the EJ&E Railroad
20 when Canadian National bought that, they didn't
21 project the usage that they are currently using
22 now. They are using that one whatever four
23 times greater usage through the suburbs than
24 they originally projected. It's not going to be

1 Canadian Wheat coming through this rail line.
2 It's going to be oil.

3 Frank likes to talk about a lot of
4 farmers can load grain on this these rail cars.
5 We all know that's not practical. If that's
6 what his rail industry is, he doesn't know what
7 rail industry is.

8 On the practical side, there is a small
9 town here called Wedron, W-E-D-R-O-N. They have
10 got several wells that are contaminated with
11 benzine and the most logical guess where that
12 benzine came from was a train derailment in the
13 70s. Again, if we are going to do an
14 environmental impact study, let's look at the
15 worst case scenario. They have a benzine leak,
16 wells are contaminated, people didn't discover
17 it for over 30 years after the fact.

18 Other than that, if we are doing an
19 environmental impact study, let's look at the
20 footprint this proposed line is taking. Let's
21 look at the rail lines that we already have in
22 northern Illinois that are underutilized. There
23 is a rail line owned by Norfolk Southern going
24 into Streator from Indiana that's hardly used,

1 maybe one train a day, maybe.

2 Illinois Railway crosses the Illinois
3 River and it intersects with this line.

4 Illinois Railway also has a line coming out of
5 Rockford going south. Well, why build more
6 tracks when we have train tracks that aren't
7 used? We have got another rail line -- we got
8 an abandoned line less than a mile paralleling
9 this track. That land is scarred.

10 We have a hard time accepting that this
11 is needed when we have damaged the land for a
12 rail line that wasn't needed now we are putting
13 another one right next to it. And, again,
14 alternative uses. If this is for Canadian oil
15 or North Dakota oil, environmentally shouldn't
16 we look and consider pipeline. If a pipeline is
17 the best way to go, then it's the best way to
18 go. If a pipeline cuts through my place and
19 that's the best way to go, then so be it but
20 yeah. I think we should look at the least
21 damaging footprint that will be created. Thank
22 you.

23 SARA MITCHELL: Good evening. I am
24 Sara Mitchell, a Director of the Grundy County

1 Farm Bureau which represents nearly 3800
2 families in Grundy County. Thank you again for
3 the opportunity to speak tonight on the impact
4 this project will have on our members,
5 landowners and residents.

6 The proposed rail line extends through
7 Grundy County for nearly 31 miles. At 200 feet
8 wide that takes 751 acres of farmland out of
9 production. This does not include the number of
10 parcels affected by flyovers, additional
11 crossings and rail spurs. Nearly 100 percent of
12 that land in these parcels is designated by the
13 USDA as prime farmland. 104 parcels will be
14 severed by this project. Of those parcels
15 severed, uneconomical remnants from as many as
16 33 farms will be created which will likely cause
17 even more prime farmland to be taken out of
18 production.

19 The GLBR will landlock 74 farms in
20 Grundy County. According to their website, the
21 developers plan to provide private crossings for
22 farmers to utilize. Will they be large enough
23 for today's agriculture equipment to safely use
24 and how will these project developers work with

1 farmers to address the issue of tracks and
2 crossings through their fields as well as their
3 maintenance.

4 If poorly designed or improperly
5 maintained, these private crossings could create
6 significant safety issues for the people that
7 use them.

8 We are also concerned with the proposal
9 as it is today and its impact on various
10 cultural and historic resources in our region.
11 Specifically we are concerned about the impact
12 the project will have on the Shabbona
13 Reservation along the Illinois River.

14 The Shabbona Reservation is an
15 archeological site of historical importance and
16 we believe that that impact of this project on
17 the site should be studied. The project
18 narrative indicates that west Indian Trail and
19 Long Point Roads will be stubbed or closed in
20 Grundy County. Many other township roads will
21 be impacted by the proposed project as well as
22 other county and state highways. These road
23 closures will alter the existing transportation
24 infrastructure, creating adverse traffic

1 conditions which will impact rural safety and
2 which will affect the level of service provided
3 by our first responders.

4 The GLBR will adversely impact the
5 socioeconomic status of our area by eliminating
6 and hindering rural development in our local
7 communities. Small businesses will be
8 restricted not only in our ability to grow and
9 expand but also in conducting their current
10 business operations.

11 As an organization working to protect
12 landowner's rights, we also adamantly oppose
13 granting authority to exercise eminent domain
14 for this project should that request arise. We
15 recognize that rail congestion through Chicago
16 is a difficult diploma, but we don't believe
17 this project represents a solution to that
18 problem.

19 The Amtrak Chicago gateway Blue Ribbon
20 Panel issued recommendations to alleviate
21 Chicago rail congestion. Those recommendations
22 did not include any rail line. We, therefore,
23 question the need for this project, particularly
24 in light of safety, land use and other uses I

1 previously identified.

2 We request the Surface Transportation
3 Board perform a full review on the proposed
4 project and that it deny any request by Great
5 Lakes Basin for the exemption of their review
6 process. Thank you.

7 STANLEY MOTTER: My name is Stanley
8 Motter. M-O-T-T-E-R. When I registered to be
9 one of the people to make comments, I thought
10 there would be donuts. First, I would like to
11 thank this STB Board for listening to all these
12 scoping meetings. I know you can't answer
13 questions. I think one of the statements made
14 in the question form like Jeopardy makes it
15 easier for the brain to process.

16 As for an environmental issue that
17 probably that will be recurring throughout the
18 entire proposed railway is water and water
19 runoff. The impact will be far reaching because
20 of the flat topography, surface and subsurface
21 water flow has to travel a great distance. A
22 raised railway bed would change or completely
23 stop water flows as we know it. What will be
24 done to guarantee long-term resolutions as they

1 occur after construction is done?

2 On the merit side the Class 1 railroads
3 who are many: BNSF, Union Pacific, Canadian
4 National, Canadian Pacific, CFX, Northfolk,
5 Kansas Southern and Amtrak. I might have missed
6 some but if these railroads haven't built a
7 bypass, why should Great Lakes Basin think it is
8 a viable endeavor?

9 With the economy as it is, farmers have
10 looked into cost cutting and becoming as
11 efficient as possible. Railroads have taken the
12 same stance, if this is such a good idea, this
13 proposed adventure, I think would have been
14 talked or introduced before now. Hedging your
15 investment by adding 50 feet to lease out to
16 utilities is this something that you as the STB
17 can even grant? Does this group have solid
18 customers waiting to use this railroad or is it
19 just speculation?

20 Every minute three acres are lost to
21 urban sprawl, some of this I'm sure are marginal
22 farmland acres but most of the land being
23 disrupted with this project are prime top
24 producing land in the country, if not the world.

1 With all the small rail lines, short lines,
2 right of ways are already in place maybe
3 connecting them could be an alternative.

4 In closing, tomorrow is Earth Day.
5 Farmers really entertain this day every day of
6 the year. I may not be the first to sell, I
7 probably won't be the last, I am just not going
8 to sell. Thank you.

9 MATT COOK: Hi. My name is Matt Cook.
10 M-A-T-T, C-O-O-K. We bought a piece of property
11 it was in the township about 14 years ago along
12 the creek and before we could build there, we
13 had to demonstrate to FEMA, another government
14 agency, that we were not in the floodplain and
15 it cost a little bit of money but we were able
16 to do that and we were able to build and we are
17 out of floodplain just barely. You know, every
18 time you flood, you see the water down to the
19 north of us about a quarter mile away from us is
20 where they plan to put the railroad and my
21 concern is that, you know, what happens to all
22 that water once that railroad comes through?

23 And another note. I think it's great
24 that Patton wants to build a railroad. America

1 should be able to do things and get rich but I
2 don't see where the government should be
3 favoring him and his corporation over all the
4 farmers that already are doing something
5 productive there. Thank you.

6 CHRISTINA RUFFATTI: My name is
7 Christina Ruffatti. C-H and Ruffatti,
8 R-U-F-F-A-T-T-I. I just want to describe where
9 I live currently in order to fully understand
10 how it's going to impact me and my family.

11 I live in Gardener off of Olagon Road
12 and my house is currently at quarter mile off
13 Olagon Road and it's all landlocked, so I am not
14 going to have direct access to the road through
15 an easement and on that easement the complete
16 easement is a creek. There is a 90-year old
17 steel bridge. The railroads where the railroads
18 is proposed to go is it about not even half a
19 back away from our house. It's going to go over
20 the creek and with the proposed railroad being
21 there, there is going to be more -- the water
22 flow is going to be disturbed and that's going
23 to create more flooding around that creek.

24 And if that had creek gets flooded,

1 then the bridge will be flooded and my family
2 will have no way either to get to our house and
3 leave our house; and then also with derailment
4 our well which is only 50 feet deep will be
5 contaminated so those are my two reasons why.
6 Thank you.

7 JORDAN JORSTAD: Hello. My name is
8 Jordan Jorstad, J-O-R-S-T-A-D. I spent some
9 time looking at the Great Lakes Basin railroad
10 website and on that website it says that it will
11 close down township roads where it deems fit to
12 reduce their chance of accidents at rail
13 crossings.

14 I look at your maps out in the lobby
15 and they have railroad crossings at almost every
16 road and even on a couple of private driveways.
17 That makes me think that this wasn't very well
18 planned and it wasn't well thought out, it could
19 easily -- we could easily see our railroad
20 crossings on the roads taken away without much
21 thought.

22 That poses a pretty big risk to us in
23 this community because of the amount of farming
24 traffic that would move to more populated roads.

1 The US Bureau of Labor Statistics has once again
2 determined that agricultural producers have the
3 highest rate of fatality of any profession in
4 the United States. The farmers in this room are
5 more likely to get killed on the job than
6 construction workers, than firemen and police
7 officers.

8 In 2015, one-third of all farming
9 fatalities in Illinois were caused by on road
10 farming accidents. The majority -- or there was
11 a five-year study done in the Midwest. It
12 determined that 80 percent of farm -- on road
13 farm vehicle accidents were in daylight and in
14 clear weather conditions. It determined that
15 the leading majority of the cause of the
16 accident was the farm vehicle being rear ended
17 closely followed by passing from behind and
18 passing when farm vehicle is trying to turn
19 left.

20 These accidents are really just being
21 caused by farm vehicles moving slowly on roads
22 where drivers are not paying attention or they
23 become frustrated and try to get around this the
24 equipment as fast as they can without really

1 knowing how far over they can get into the
2 shoulder of the road or what the farm or what
3 the operator is going to do with their vehicle.

4 Closing down these township roads will
5 put a lot of farm vehicles traffic onto more
6 heavily traveled roads because the motorists
7 will also be forced off of township roads and
8 everyone will be using less roads. Putting this
9 railroad in any farming community increases the
10 risk of death and injury to not only the farm
11 workers but also to any motorists traveling in
12 the area. It could be anyone on their commute
13 to work during their job or their ride home.

14 In closing I'd like to remind all the
15 farmers here to be safe. It's planting season
16 and get home safely. Thank you.

17 BRAD TEMPLE: Good evening. My name is
18 Brad Temple, T-E-M-P-L-E. I live and farm near
19 the proposed route milepost in between 130 and
20 140 and in that short ten miles of track the
21 line will cross the Fox River and Indian Creek
22 Valleys that are heavily wooded, requiring
23 clearing of mature trees and native plants to
24 build bridges for crossings.

1 One of the concerns I do have to
2 maintain that 1 percent grade that's mentioned
3 so often in their narrative, there is a lot of
4 slope to these lands and where is all that fill
5 going to come from? It's going to require
6 thousands if not billions or more tons of fill
7 to create these approaches that they can go
8 across these crossings, but more importantly
9 it's also an area where thousands of people
10 every summer, spring, fall come to enjoy a canoe
11 ride down the Fox River. They come from
12 Chicago, they come from Aurora, they come from
13 our local communities because they want to enjoy
14 the tranquil rural surroundings.

15 On both sides of the valley are flat
16 rich farm fields. These fields, as mentioned
17 earlier, are drained by field tile which make
18 them extremely productive for crop production.
19 I don't consider any of this land green space or
20 undeveloped as what I have read in some of the
21 materials that they see it as undeveloped.

22 According to the 2012 AG Census,
23 LaSalle County ranked 5th in the nation for
24 acres of corn production. That's hardly

1 undeveloped. Agricultural production
2 contributes nearly \$460 million to LaSalle
3 County.

4 Now while this proposal really doesn't
5 run through my farm yet as proposed, it will
6 have a dramatic effect because when the drainage
7 tile is crushed, broken or cut off, our farms
8 become like water soaked sponges hampering the
9 ability to raise crops.

10 In Great Lakes Basin's own narrative on
11 Page 13, they readily admit that after a
12 rainfall water may be present in and adjacent to
13 the right-of-way. The railroad bed will then
14 act like a dam holding back the water not
15 allowing it to escape and impede the natural
16 drainage flow.

17 If our drainage tile is cut or broken,
18 it not only had affects the immediate landowner
19 but it is likely that the tile can continue for
20 a mile or more affecting all the neighboring
21 fields and rendering their land more
22 unproductive, too. What makes a farmland prime
23 is the rich soil, the high organic matter
24 combined with our ability to properly drain our

1 land.

2 Many of the drainage tile in our area
3 are relatively shallow. Some being less than
4 two feet under that surface and they are made of
5 clay, many of the older ones.

6 Obviously construction equipment and
7 building on this proposed right-of-way would be
8 devastating to that infrastructure, essentially
9 having a negative financial impact on every
10 piece of farming ground near this rail line.
11 For generations, we landowners have allowed
12 right of ways on our land for public
13 infrastructure to help build this country. Most
14 likely you all drove here tonight on some of
15 that land that was acquired from private
16 landowners.

17 But I have to say a project of this
18 magnitude is unprecedented in recent history and
19 is not a public use. I respectfully urge the
20 STB to conduct a full review of this proposal.
21 Thank you for your time.

22 SHARON DANIELSON: Sharon Danielson.
23 S-H-A-R-O-N, D-A-N-I-E-L-S-O-N. The Great Lakes
24 Basin Railroad's proposed railroad cuts right

1 through the center of a farm my son rents. He
2 has spent lots of time and money putting in new
3 tiles and waterways. The water runs heavy
4 across the farm, but he has stopped the erosion
5 and turned it into a very productive farm. The
6 rail line goes right over these improvements.
7 It will cut off the natural flow of the water
8 and cause flooding. There will be no road
9 access for half of the farm.

10 The elderly ladies who own the land
11 have lived on it most of their lives. They were
12 in tears over the proposed railroad cutting
13 their farm in half and being next to their home.
14 The noise and diesel fumes from 100 trains per
15 day going 70 miles per hour is only the
16 beginning of the impact on their lives. A small
17 amount of money now will never make up for the
18 loss of farm income in the future, or the
19 devaluation of the property values. No one will
20 ever want to buy or rent a house that close to a
21 railroad, or a farm that has a train track
22 dividing it and floods.

23 These ladies will never sell any part
24 of the family farm they love. I hate to think

1 of them trying to negotiate with the land
2 agents. It will take eminent domain to force
3 them to let Great Lakes Basin Railroad build on
4 their property this is just one of many family
5 farms on the proposed route, but none of us who
6 live anywhere near it want to see our quiet
7 country life ruined by train noise, closed roads
8 and we certainly don't want to wait for anymore
9 trains.

10 Anyone who has ever tried to come to
11 Jazzercise here in Seneca will tell you we have
12 to wait a lot for trains in Seneca. Well, we
13 don't want to have to wait for them going into
14 Morris either so it would probably cause me to
15 go the other way to go to town so I don't have
16 to cross the tracks which is a shame for the
17 stores in Morris.

18 Please, Board, as you consider this,
19 think of the people who are involved. Please
20 find this rail proposal inconsistent with the
21 public convenience and necessity. Thank you so
22 much.

23 SUSAN SACK: Susan Sack. S-U-S-A-N,
24 S-A-C-K. I have been to three of the Surface

1 Transportation scoping meetings now and I have
2 heard many comments. Repeatedly, I have heard
3 how people feel blindsided and helpless. We
4 don't feel we are able to get accurate
5 information regarding the project. As stated,
6 Dave Navecky himself said in Manteno he himself
7 was having difficult getting info from the GLB
8 website.

9 Frank Patton's credibility is shot. We
10 are finding things on YouTube we are finding
11 things comments stated all over by this man.
12 Hollow promises, free electricity to landowners,
13 use of the rail line, insults to the community
14 of LaPorte saying what's being taught in your
15 schools when the school district sent out memos
16 to parents to tell them to attend the meetings.

17 Then we come to the fact that we read
18 in 2012 under a bakken oil article the name
19 Mr. P-E-H-T-E I believe it was or R-E who was
20 the marketing advisor for Great Lakes Basin
21 saying that 90 percent of the funding for the
22 project is going to come from federal loans.
23 Federal railroad loans.

24 We are hearing Frank threaten quick

1 take eminent domain and one of the goofiest I
2 have seen him saying out of his mouth at the
3 LaPorte meeting and it's on YouTube the bridges
4 will become tourist attractions. How credible
5 is this man? How can any of us think we are up
6 against this person? A person in Rochelle said
7 he was from the local government and when Patton
8 had come to them earlier years, earlier with his
9 plan, they brushed him off as a nut job and here
10 we are risking our health, our life, our safety.

11 Last night you had a person collapse
12 and have a heart attack over this. What need is
13 there for this? No need has to be proven. How
14 did it get this far? We have got investors that
15 are private wanting to -- saying they can use
16 quick take eminent domain. They are just going
17 to go to Delaware and file as three separate
18 corporations and they are going to be able to
19 have our land and be building in 2018.

20 We have heard all of kinds of things
21 that are very threatening to us and we are
22 downright afraid and angry and we feel abused by
23 the system, and I wanted to be here tonight and
24 look you in the eye and say you'd better not

1 come back and say that you got so much great
2 input from all these people who came to the
3 meetings that gave you input on choosing the
4 route, that they have helped select the route
5 and now you are going to tell them they have to
6 change a little bit here and there to
7 accommodate what the comments were and rubber
8 stamped it through because we helped choose the
9 route for you.

10 How many people in here feel like you
11 are here to choose the route for Great Lakes
12 Basin? I didn't see a hand go up. We are not
13 here for that purpose. We are here to ask you
14 to say absolutely no to this game. There is no
15 need and there should never be eminent domain
16 used for a private investor's gain. Thank you.

17 DEBBIE WOLLGAST: Hi. My name is
18 Debbie Wollgast, D-E-B-B-I-E, W-O-L-L-G-A-S-T
19 and I am a lifelong resident of Grundy County.

20 Just like thousands of people, this
21 proposed rail line would affect me and my
22 family, many, many of my family and friends and
23 I can stand up here for hours and hours and tell
24 you why it is wrong. It should not go through

1 and how it would affect us; but I'm not going to
2 do that because I don't want to get the stop
3 sign, but I do have three real concerns.

4 One of them is there is so much
5 concrete on this earth already, why would we
6 want to pour concrete on top of soil that God
7 has provided us for one sole purpose and that is
8 the purpose of feeding the world.

9 The second issue I have is that my
10 grandfather just like Dick Joyce talked about
11 and my great grandfather came here and they were
12 coal miners. I grew up hearing numerous stories
13 of how extensive and massive those mine shafts
14 are and I can't see -- I don't know much about
15 coal mining even though I came from a coal
16 mining family, and I don't know much about rail
17 lines but it doesn't make sense to me to put a
18 railroad over top of big hollow portions of
19 ground. I don't think that sounds safe at all.

20 And my third concern, I don't know if
21 it has been considered, we also live amongst
22 nuclear power plants and with the changing of
23 all these roads in our area and closures, what's
24 going to happen God forbid if we ever did have

1 to have a nuclear evacuation? How is that going
2 to impact our area on trying to get out if
3 anything ever did happen with these nuclear
4 plants.

5 I think we need to consider taking care
6 of this earth that God has given us and stop
7 using it for personal gain. Thank you.

8 MARK JORSTAD: Good evening. Mark
9 Jorstad, J-O-R-S-T-A-D. I had several notes
10 that I am not going to use because they would be
11 repetitive of the people that have all spoke as
12 I might point out in opposition for various
13 reasons.

14 The one thing I will ask you in the
15 worse case scenario this thing is built, would
16 you please try to put something in place so that
17 this private investment group puts money into an
18 escrow will account that can be drawn on in the
19 case of a catastrophic emergency. Why should
20 our local ambulances, fire departments,
21 townships, counties be responsible for the
22 cleanup when a private enterprise uses eminent
23 domain possibly to come in and profitize from
24 this.

1 So if we were going to have the worst
2 case scenario, try to make it the best for us in
3 the future. Force them to put millions of
4 dollars into an escrow account so that when they
5 do go bankrupt, we got something. Thank you.

6 THOMAS KING: Thomas King, Earlville,
7 Illinois. I want to talk about the lack of
8 public access to these meetings. I come walking
9 in the door first of all Earlville, your choice
10 there, you gave me a choice of drive 50 some
11 miles north or coming 40 miles south. You are
12 going to run 110 trains past Earlville, right on
13 the edge of Earlville but yet we have no
14 public -- we have no public accommodations for a
15 meeting there.

16 You have the meeting at 5:30 at night.
17 Most people in Earlville are just getting home
18 from work at 5:30 at night. Now how do you
19 expect them to come and make these meetings. I
20 come in the door here, driving in from
21 Earlville, there is no signs in here to show me
22 where to go, what to do, so I am late for the
23 meeting.

24 You have an overflow crowd here. You

1 don't even give us a stadium big enough to hold
2 the people that want to come in from Earlville.
3 When I look at the maps in there, there is no
4 towns on there. If there is, they are very few
5 of them so I am mulling through these maps
6 trying to figure out where Earlville is and how
7 close that railroad is getting to me.

8 You want to talk about major spills,
9 you have these hula trains, you have these oil
10 cars, all these toxic chemicals that they
11 complain about going through the city, you are
12 going to run it right next to Earlville but we
13 don't deserve a public hearing.

14 I'm tired of this. It's like this is a
15 fix. You need to go back and start having
16 public hearings close enough for the people to
17 come in and register their complaints. When I
18 am walking in the door and I am having people
19 walking back out the door, you just denied those
20 people the right to speak. Thank you.

21 MARY AUCHSTETTER: Mary, M-A-R-Y,
22 Auchstetter, A-U-C-H-S-T-E-T-T-ER. And you can
23 start recording now. The people most affected
24 by the Great Basin Transport, LLC first became

1 aware of this project in mid March, and the word
2 is just getting out to so many of them. A month
3 later we are here supposed to be making an
4 environmental statement. Many of the people are
5 still in the state of shock.

6 No Great Lake Basin official has taken
7 the time or effort to talk to us. To them, our
8 land is what is important to them, not us. Yet
9 Great Lake Basin will dictate how we are to live
10 and farm. How can we make environmental
11 statements when we are not given answers to our
12 basic questions. We lack important details.

13 People concerned about the environment
14 had to do independent study on their own on the
15 so-called secret project. And I want to thank
16 you for holding the scoping meeting and I think
17 Dave is from the Surface Boards, is that right,
18 are you? And we appreciate you being here and
19 meeting us. It means so much.

20 There is several articles that I looked
21 at and about -- and what I can pick from these
22 articles and from a map on the Trans Canada oil
23 pipeline which I have given to the clerk but you
24 can see later I can say that the primary purpose

1 of his railroad is to transport dozens of barrels
2 of bakken oil through our rural areas.

3 The first question is at what point is
4 exporting large amounts of bakken oil the best
5 for the environment?

6 Great Lakes Basin is a Keystone
7 pipeline. A federal agency, Great Lake
8 Commission that deals with all forms of the oil
9 transport, that's trucks, vessels, barges,
10 trains, says, All modes of crude oil transport
11 pose potential risk to the environment, public
12 health and community safety.

13 Under trains they list five factors
14 which I'm not going to be able to have time to
15 go into but I left the paper which I summarized
16 them and they pertain to the areas here and
17 examples of train derailments that have happened
18 in our area.

19 All these trains, these oil trains, are
20 called bomb oil trains. It is not a matter of
21 if but sad to say when and where first.
22 Maintained tracks have derailments. Look at
23 Mendota, Earlville, Grundy, Galena, Twiiskwa,
24 Toluca, all local in the past few years had

1 derailments. How is a track that has trains
2 every 15 minutes going to keep the rails safe.

3 The real pain and the sadness is Great
4 Lake Basin Transportation, LLC value urban and
5 Chicago folks over rural people. It is okay for
6 an oil bomb train to pass through a rural area
7 but not urban. Our lives, our farmlands are not
8 as important. Does the STB Board feel the same?
9 To me people are part of the environment.

10 There are three possible decisions. A
11 total a yes, a yes to mitigations, we all know
12 what mitigations mean. The farmer gives, the
13 railroad gets its way. We have been down that
14 track before.

15 The only answers for the environment is
16 a complete no. No alternative routes. They are
17 not safe either. Why create this environmental
18 problem in the first place. Anyone not only
19 those in the Great Basin path must be concerned
20 with this pending environment hazardous that
21 these trains will create. This is especially
22 true of our officials for the County boards and
23 the school boards to the people in the congress.

24 They are -- We vote for them and they

1 have a duty to protect and represent us. If
2 everybody here would write a letter to the
3 Surface Board, it would have a great effect and
4 thank you very much.

5 MIKE PASTERNAK: My name Mike
6 Pasternak. P-A-S-T-E-R-N-A-K. I am here
7 representing the Garden Fire Protection
8 District. I am president of the trustees. Our
9 first concern is limited access. If we do cross
10 many of these roads, which is brought up by my
11 colleagues from Sheridan, that will have a
12 negative effect on response times for a fire EMS
13 personnel.

14 Now they can tell you it's only go
15 going to take three or four extra minutes. When
16 it's you on the other end waiting for an
17 ambulance or a fire those minutes turn into
18 hours. We have also heard of upwards of 100,
19 100 plus trains coming through hauling God knows
20 what. What happens when one derails? Our fire
21 and EMS personnel are going to have to respond
22 on that. Who pays for the training for these
23 personnel? Who pays for the extra equipment
24 that these people are going to need when they

1 show up. The taxpayer? Good luck getting the
2 tax out of it just because it's not a farm where
3 you are paying tax on.

4 The Garden Fire Protection District
5 does not feel the taxpayer should be on the hook
6 for the train and extra equipment for a project
7 such as this. Thank you.

8 JACK SCHROEDER: My name is Jack
9 Schroeder. S-C-H-R-O-E-D-E-R. I am a local
10 private landowner, I am a business owner, I am a
11 father, I am a man just like a lot of people
12 here and I am a very passionate about what I
13 love to do and what I don't like.

14 One of the questions I have that no one
15 has really addressed it but it has come out a
16 hundred percent tonight is who is going to take
17 care of the emotional trauma for all of these
18 people that don't want this to happen? Nobody
19 has spoken about who pays for that. I am
20 probably the least emotional person that my wife
21 knows and she'll attest to that but when I look
22 in this crowd and I see everybody here that says
23 no I would like that addressed.

24 If the world says no, why would we make

1 this for a private investor. I am in private
2 business and I work my butt off like many of the
3 other people here, I am a part-time farmer, I am
4 a wildlife conservationist, I do everything I
5 can possibly can every waking minute but what I
6 don't know is how the Transportation Board is
7 going to take every one of these people that are
8 affected in this room and pay for the
9 representation for them to say no.

10 The private investors have a lot of
11 money behind them, but these people here don't
12 have big shot lawyers. They don't have a lot of
13 money behind them. They might have some grain
14 in the bin. Two years ago it was worth \$7 a
15 bushel. Today it might be worth 3. They can't
16 have that same representation and I'd like to
17 know how the Board can address that and help
18 every one of us out privately.

19 Additionally, I'd like to know why good
20 commonsense here doesn't matter. Basically
21 saying if no one wants this and the select few
22 do want it, why would you even consider opening
23 that up for discussion. I know maybe that's the
24 wrong way to put it discussion but the rest of

1 the meetings that have happened does everybody
2 want this to occur and if they do, then it's the
3 will of the people but if the will of the people
4 say no, then I would suggest that you look very
5 closely at that.

6 I ask each one of the Board members to
7 put themselves in everyone here's shoes first
8 because that's your job. We pay your taxes. We
9 pay for your job. We fund everything that you
10 are doing for the taxpayer, and I would urge you
11 to say if I were in that house, if I were in
12 that farm, if I were worried about the waterway,
13 how would I like it handled because you are not
14 going to be affected by it whether you live in
15 Washington, DC or some other part of the world
16 but everyone in here is affected by it. That's
17 why they are all here.

18 Whether or not they are directly
19 affected by it, I am not -- I am only half a
20 mile. Well, a half a mile but if they move
21 that, if they open up an old road that four of
22 us landowners spent vast sums of money to get
23 vacated so we could keep any of that intrusion
24 in our wildlife, in our back yards that were out

1 in the country, who is going to help us protect
2 to do that when the railroad wants to come
3 through? I would love to have somebody address
4 that and say you are going to appoint a lawyer
5 for me that's taxpayer paid for because I have
6 paid all my dues for 55 years of my life but now
7 I have to defend myself against these people
8 that have all the money, and I think everyone
9 else here would say the same thing. Why should
10 they take their funding to say no for someone to
11 take their land.

12 If it was for the good of the country
13 we might consider it but I'd have to agree with
14 Mark Jerstad, I just don't see it. Put the
15 money away. If they really think it's that
16 valuable, then put all that money aside to help
17 us protect ourselves, whether it's a spill,
18 whether it's taking your land away or not, I say
19 help us out. Don't just side with the other
20 ones. Thank you very much.

21 KEN DAGGET: I am Ken Dagget. I live
22 on West South Road in Morris. I deferred
23 earlier because I thought there was people here
24 and I was right. They had a lot more to say

1 that I do but I don't know -- I don't know Frank
2 Patton at all. I wouldn't know him if he walked
3 in the room. I can tell you right now I
4 wouldn't like Frank. For anybody to do what he
5 is doing with no conscious whatsoever, sit there
6 and have such along and lasting effect on the
7 people. He makes all kinds of promises, he will
8 give you free electricity, he will put up a
9 railroad so you can load grain right there, he
10 makes all those promises but what's going to
11 happen when it does get it?

12 He comes to this Surface Transportation
13 Board and he is asking the Surface
14 Transportation Board to give him eminent domain
15 to our property. Now that takes a lot of guts
16 for somebody to come and say, okay. I want that
17 guy's property let me take it. Now this is --
18 what's going to happen when he does get eminent
19 domain to our property? He is going to come and
20 take anything he wants from any one of us.

21 Now if they give him the right for
22 eminent domain that's going to wipe out a whole
23 lot of peoples' property and a lot of trust in
24 our system. I just -- I just had to say that.

1 I'm sorry. Thank you.

2 DON MCNELIS: Don McNeils. D-O-N
3 capital M-C capital N-E-L-I-S. I am from
4 Sheridan, Illinois and I have through other
5 reasons have become an expert on aquifers in
6 this area.

7 Okay. The deep well aquifer comes down
8 from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin down into
9 Illinois and it exits goes through Mission
10 Township which is Sheridan, there is about 800
11 people in Sheridan they are all on wells and it
12 enters the Fox River at Section 5 and goes
13 north -- Section 5 which is north of Sheridan,
14 Section 8 which is south of Sheridan exactly
15 where the train is coming through and the
16 Prairie du Chien there is two type of aquifers,
17 there is a downgrade aquifer which is like a tie
18 dye sheet T-shirt. It goes out.

19 Anyway, upgrading aquifer which feeds
20 up from the Prairie du Chien into the shallow
21 water aquifer which is near Sheridan, Illinois
22 is the Mokopita aquifer and it is approximately
23 110 to 160 feet deep. Okay.

24 Let's take my well. My well is

1 110 feet deep and my pump is at 70 feet. If the
2 train would derail and spill into this aquifer,
3 I would probably be drinking contaminated water
4 in maybe a month because there is nobody around
5 to clean up the spill in a timely manner.

6 Okay. That aquifer also enters the Fox
7 River from Section 5 to Section 8 in Sheridan,
8 Illinois in LaSalle County thus polluting also
9 Fox River and going down the Fox River into the
10 Illinois. Thank you.

11 RICK COLEMAN: Hi. Rick, R-I-C-K,
12 C-O-L-E-M-A-N. I wasn't prepared to talk but
13 this is an article I think everybody should be
14 aware of. I am going to skim through it as fast
15 as I can. That was written in September of last
16 year. It's about Grafton, Massachusetts and it
17 says that -- let's see, the tiny 16 and a half
18 mile railroad has been nearly defunct. It was
19 purchased in 2008 by John Christoli, a major
20 local developer with a pension for railroads.
21 He also owns another business in town.

22 At least one town official visited the
23 site to ask about the construction and the
24 railroad's plans, said he was told the

1 railroad's activities were not subject to review
2 by the town.

3 In December of 2012, Driscoll & Meilly
4 finally unveiled his plans to more than 100
5 residents in a meeting in the municipal gym.
6 The railroad yard announced it will become a
7 propane transfer or transloading facility
8 meaning the propane would be brought there by
9 rail and unloaded on the tanker trucks to be
10 distributed with four 120 foot long 80,000
11 gallon storage tanks to be filled, up to 2,000
12 train tank cars a year, it would be the biggest
13 rail propane facility in Massachusetts.
14 Residents were dumbfounded.

15 The location was in the middle of a
16 residential neighborhood, less than 200 feet
17 from an elementary school and atop the town's
18 water supply but aside from the application to
19 its state fire marshal, the railroad's owner had
20 not requested nor obtained, town officials say,
21 any local construction permits, environmental
22 assessments, zoning variances or permission.

23 And as residents would learn, it was
24 the railroad's position it did not have to,

1 being a railroad to Grafton and Upton was exempt
2 from all state and local laws that interfered
3 with their business. This is a legal doctrine
4 known as preemption. As one resident put it,
5 you mean we have no rights.

6 Around the country in towns as small as
7 Grafton and as large as Philadelphia and
8 Chicago, communities are beginning to ask the
9 same question as the domestic energy boom makes
10 the expansion of railroad infrastructure, the
11 those trains carry crude oil, propane and
12 ethanol, a profitable venture indeed.

13 The rail industry has exploited
14 historic exemptions from state and local laws to
15 build often massive transfer and processing
16 stations free from virtually all laws and
17 requirements without regard for basic laws,
18 protecting the community in which they are
19 based.

20 Railroads are exploiting a large
21 surprising loophole in federal regulatory laws
22 critics say and they are doing so with the
23 backing of an obscured federal agency called the
24 Surface Transportation Board which has been

1 quietly creating what some call a regulation
2 free zone and asserting a jurisdiction over
3 railroads that trumps health and safety laws.
4 The result is a regulatory holding of a private
5 train through said Jenny Singlecreber, an
6 attorney who represents the town of Grafton in
7 its legal battles against the transloading
8 facility and the STB. Thank you.

9 LEONARD TRYNER: Leonard Tryner.
10 L-E-O-N-A-R-D. T-R-Y-N-E-R. I think I am
11 probably the one everybody is looking for, the
12 last one. I will be affected by this as the map
13 currently is -- will be going through my home
14 farm, and I am opposed.

15 The main thing that I will more of a
16 question for you. If eminent domain were
17 granted, and the reason I am asking this I am
18 the Great Lakes website the number bantered
19 about has been like \$20,000 per acre but if
20 eminent domain is granted, aren't they only
21 required to pay the average price of farmland?
22 Is that correct or am I wrong?

23 I am -- and I am -- I am asking you the
24 members of the SBT or STB. Does it -- Is

1 eminent domain based on current land values? I
2 guess I am not getting an answer. Thank you.

3 MR. GRAVES: Just remember that this is
4 a hearing session but your question will
5 eventually will be addressed as part of the
6 overall scope.

7 STEVEN KODAT: Steve Kodat. S-T-E-V-E
8 K-O-D-A-T. I am here as a farmer. I will have
9 some property that will be close to this, not
10 directly affected and I am the president of the
11 Grundy County Farm Bureau, I would assume that
12 as a Board that we are going to be opposed for
13 this. I am not going to speak to for my Board
14 members but that's the consensus that I get and
15 I wanted this to be on record in case there are
16 no other meetings in Grundy County.

17 A couple of other observations that I
18 have had and we deal with the BNSF on some of
19 our farms, a couple years ago they just closed a
20 road. The train wanted to have space for
21 parking extra trains and we have two or three
22 big intermodals right next to us in Will County,
23 so they basically closed the township road, paid
24 off the road commissioner I believe and we

1 basically had to go around three miles to get to
2 the other side that used to take, you know, 10
3 seconds to cross.

4 And the other thing that occurs to me
5 is when you look at that map and Frank Patton
6 says yes, this is obvious it should go this way,
7 it kind of looks like to me that it's obvious
8 yes but would I have noticed with a lot of these
9 other projects that they build, highways and
10 interchanges, it doesn't alleviate the problem
11 that it's trying to alleviate. All it does is
12 cause future congestion because that's where
13 everybody expands and builds to and, you know,
14 if you think that any possible remote in the
15 future that this line will go through, you know,
16 they are basically going to have us trapped
17 between here and Chicago and the tracks that we
18 try to cross sometimes going to Joliet, you
19 know, if you get behind a train that's sitting
20 there you will sit there for 20 minutes, well,
21 do we take and go back and take an extra
22 30 minutes to get around it.

23 So I just want to kind of point those
24 things out. Thanks.

1 MR. GRAVES: Thank you, ladies and
2 gentlemen. This ends the oral comment period
3 for our meeting today. Thank you everyone who
4 provided oral comments in this meeting. If you
5 did not make comments, you are allowed to make
6 comment in written form. If you go to the
7 Surface Transportation Board website or submit
8 comments via US postal service and the
9 information for doing that is in the brochure
10 that you were given this evening.

11 As Dave mentioned at the beginning of
12 his presentation, the comment period has been
13 extended to June 15th. Thank you very much for
14 your attendance this evening. We are adjourned.

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4/21/2016

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that I, PAULA ANN ERICKSON, CSR, RPR, CLR and Notary Public, do hereby certify that I reported in machine shorthand the proceedings held at the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line EIS Public Scoping Meeting, on April 21, 2016 and that this transcript is a true and accurate transcription of my machine shorthand notes so taken to the best of my ability.



PAULA ERICKSON, CSR, RPR

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Dated this 17th day
of May 2016.

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