

Dave Navecky

Service Transportation Board

Docket No. FD 35952

My name is Richard Beuth: I am president of the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau. We have 9700 members of whom 1,150 are voting members which means that they are farmers or own farmland. We have been very concerned about this Great Lakes Basin Railroad Project since we heard about it in the media last year. At that time it only was in Winnebago but now it will affect both counties. We have earnestly educated both our members and the public what information we have gathered.

In April our Board of Directors voted unanimously "to be opposed to this project at this time, but our organization will continue to evaluate the project and have the right to change our position if the economic interests and benefits outweigh the costs."

This vote was the result of research on this new company, analyzing the proposed maps, talking with our members who will be directly and indirectly affected by putting the railroad on their land and discussion with the State Farm Bureau legal staff.

The Illinois Farm Bureau has several policies regarding this issue. Policy # 133 states "We will meet with railroad officials to determine ways to improve rail service to agriculture across Illinois". It is very hard to see how the Great Lakes Basin Railroad will help agriculture in Boone County when it doesn't even make one stop to pick-up our grain or deliver inputs.

Policy #131 says "We will support the oversight of railroad construction projects to minimize disturbance to adjoining farmland and farming operations and to adequately protect drainage systems". Also "to use marginal farmland or poorer grades of land for new railroad construction in order to preserve tillable farmland".

As anyone who has looked at the maps or driven the proposed route, there will be a great amount of farmland and farmstead disturbance. In fact, over 1% of the tillable Boone County farmland will be used by the railroad and 3-4% more will be affected by landlocked or severed parcels, drainage issues, extra travel and inconvenience of moving farm machinery, weed and tree issues on their right of way and many more issues.

Policy #44 states "We oppose the use of eminent domain in the taking of private property for the purpose of economic development by a private party".

Enough said!

The Farm Bureau strongly recommends to the (STB) that there be a full review of GLB project and **NOT** grant an exemption to the environmental review process.



Richard Beuth

5238 S. Spielman Road

Leaf River, IL 61047

Dave Navecky Surface Transportation Board

Docket No. FD 35952

I am Richard Beuth, president of the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau. Our Board of Directors voted unanimously “to oppose this project at this time”.

W-B FB and all Landowners who could be impacted by this project have many unanswered questions. We understand that you can’t answer questions but the STB is responsible for reviewing the merits of this proposed project and the W-B FB requests that the STB conduct a Full review of the transportation merits of the project.

We understand that the STB typically grants exemptions from the full transportation review process when requested by applicants. This is not the typical applicant or project. GLB is not a railroad, in fact, it’s a start-up company, with no freight rail experience. The current proposed route is now 280 miles long and most of that cuts through highly productive farmland which cannot be replaced.

We know there is rail congestion in Chicago, but the panels created to study the problem haven’t suggested that a 281 mile bypass is the answer.

GLB included a 50 foot corridor for possible future use by utilities in its current plan. In GLB’s Route Narrative, it Provides a utility corridor for improved electricity, water, natural gas, fiber optics, and wireless coverage, both to support railroad operations and to provide new options for our neighbors. Railroad don’t need a utility corridor to

support their railroad operations and the STB doesn't have authority to approve these utilities.

GLB says that this 50 foot utility corridor would be another source of revenue for GLB. I'm sure it would be, but we believe that it's Unconstitutional for a private company to take our land for a railroad and then turn around and sell it off or grant easements for uses which have nothing to do with a railroad. Should GLB request authority to exercise eminent domain, the State F.B. will oppose such a request.

On a map it shows we will lose 270 acres of farmland in Winnebago County. But we will really lose around 1500 acres when you count land lock and severed parcels.

In addition to removing a valuable natural resource, which cannot be replaced, this project will cause both surface and tile line drainage issues, result in increased daily travel by impacted residents, school buses, emergency responders and farmers with farm machinery and poses public health and safety issues.

The Farm Bureau strongly recommends to the STB that there be a full review of the transportation merits of the GLB project and **NOT** grant an exemption for this project.

Richard Beuth



5238 S. Spielman Road

Leaf River, IL 61047

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

Dear Mr. Navecky:

I would like to express my concerns over the proposed Great Lakes Basin Transportation, LLC rail line project. Docket # 35952. I oppose the project and ask the Surface Transportation Board to deny the proposal.

I am president of the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau. Over the last three months I have talked with many farmers in our two counties that will be affected by the GLB railroad. The main concerns these farmers have are the splitting of their property by the railroad. On your maps, the railroad splits many parcels into two uneven parcels. It is much worst for the farmer if the route goes diagonally through the farm. In many cases this makes the land on one side landlocked. There's no way for the farmer to get to his property without going through a neighbors land to get to his property if the railroad does not make a grade crossing for the farmer. There will be many cases where it will be impossible to make a grade crossing because of the elevation of the railroad track. This will make the far parcel almost worthless to the farmer and he will be forced to sell it to a neighbor next to that land at a reduced price.

When you make the final maps, you should make the tracks go as much as possible at the middle of the section at a straight line. Most farms are half a mile long so it would be the least damage if the railroad would run along these property lines.

Another major issue is the drainage of the water that will be affected by the tracks. All farmers have seen how new highways have destroyed farm fields by altering the drainage. Many of these fields have tile lines – some have been in for over 80 years. When a major project such as a new highway or railroad is built, there never seems to be a good way to keep the water flowing in its natural way no matter how much money is spent on putting cement tile lines under the new project. When the water will not drain away this makes the land nearly worthless

since it is too wet to work. When the railroad uses eminent domain to take the farmers property, they will only pay for the land that they are using. The real cost to the farmer is the other ground next to the railroad that he may not be able to farm because of the drainage issues and also problems with the weeds and trees that always grow up on the sides of the railroad tracks.

Another concern is the new railroad coming very close to some livestock farms. At the very west part of the GLB railroad in Winnebago County where it merges with the Canadian National Railroad, it comes within 100 yards of a new 400 cow dairy farm. This noise will have a negative effect on the cows and workers. This will also prevent this family from expanding their dairy because the only direction that they can go is towards the proposed railroad. When you do your studies, you need to find out which farms have livestock and try to stay away from these farms. In many cases your railroad goes right through the pastures or grazing lots that the farmers need for their livestock.

Overall this GLB railroad will have a very negative affect on the farmers and agriculture community. I would strongly encouraged the STB to fix the problem of congestion in Chicago by funding the projects that have been proposed in Chicago. There is really no benefit to any farmer. The GLB railroad has said that they will allow a landowner next to the railroad to have a siding that they could use to load their crops. This would never work. It is getting hard for smaller grain elevators to get the railroads to drop off 10 to 25 rail cars to load grain on. The railroads only want to go to the new elevators that can load 110 cars in less than 10 hours. No railroad would ever stop to pick up 1 or 2 cars for 1 farmer. Besides the farmer would never spend the money needed to load that 1 car when he can send his grain by semi- truck to an elevator or ethanol plant.

I asked your board to not approve this project because of the damage it would do to the farmers that will be affected for many generations to come. Once the track is put in someone will use it for the next 100 years and the small amount of money that the landowner may get now will not even start to compensate their family for all the problems it will cause.



Richard Beuth

5238 S. Spielman Road Leaf River, IL 61047

FROM

Leaf River, IL 61047



TO

Dave Mavecky
Surface Transportation Board - Data + FD35952
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