

6-6-2016

EI-24248

Dave Manesky
Surface Transportation Board
Washington DC. 20423-0001
ATTN: Docket # FD 35952

- We are writing concerning the Great Lakes Basin proposed rail line in the WI, IL, and IN. area. We live in the rural area at the north end of the planned line where there may be a single track. The rail line will pass acrossed over 77 acre field changing our planting practice. We object to this rail line as it will consume considerable rich farm land yet it will benefit only a few rich PRIVATE investors. Stop this train before it is too late. It does not benefit farmers.
- We do not believe enough study has been spent on the aption of the G L B using the existing abandoned rail lines in southern Wisconsin. Too much emphasis has been on the investors wanting an eight hour trip around the Chicago area versus the thirty hours they say it takes now. If, a high speed train at 70 miles per hour will be a time saver --- Time is money! That goes for the farmer too. One large field takes less time than two smaller fields. Again - Time is money! Remember, the 70 miles per hour train will be far more dangerous to the public. We suggest you slow the train speed down to 50 m.p.h. and run the G L B trains on the abandoned lines thru some smaller towns as there are three unused lines available. This will save the farmland for farming making all the rural folks happy. At the same time you are saving the rich investors quite a bit of money. The slower train, speed will save lives making America a safer place to live.
 - The question which of the rail lines will be involved with this new G L B line proposed for WI, IL, and IN area? Two rail lines have made the announcement they won't be involved. Can the G L B survive if the unknown PRIVATE investors act alone? They don't qualify for government help.

- We wonder if the GHB has applied to operate on the existing rail tracks which run from Milton to Whitewater, Wisconsin. That is an old line and cannot operate with your high speed rail use.
- The also question whether the GHB has completed a comprehensive study as to what products will be moved on their proposed line; where will the loads originate. Are the property owners, have not been informed as yet and we should know this now, not later. There are too many unknowns three months after the news that a rail line was cutting thru our farm land.
- We feel the GHB has an air of secrecy concerning the few investors involved in this rail line. Why must they remain secret? If they are proud of this non-public investment they should gladly seek our approval. We need to know more. Had we been given more details we could be objecting to you on specific issues. Facts may come out in four weeks or two months from now and it will be past the June 15th date to correspond. Most land owners object to this unnecessary train proposal and hope the Surface Transportation Board rejects this rail plan because there is lacking details necessary for approval. The GHB must provide more information to the public.
- We feel safety of the public is vital. When safety fails and unexpected accidents happen it is important that accidents can be handled quickly. We feel the GHB must supply the new rail line with an Emergency Facility fully equipped with all machines needed to handle a derailment or spill or fire caused by the rail line. This facility must be paid for by the many investors and named 24-7. The local emergency need not be responsible for train accidents. These Emergency Facilities must be spaced along the three state areas to insure help within 20 minutes from each station or about 40 miles apart.

- We hear reports, after a serious derailment, about the massive damage to the area around the scene of the accident. Damage from spills, fires and basic clean-up along with loss of life can be extremely expensive. Therefore a special fund must be set up to cover these damages. The new fund can be called Railroad Emergency Fund. We suggest the GLB investors place 10 Billion into this fund before constructing the new rail line. This fund is over and above the usual insurance trains carry. Rural Townships and small towns will not be responsible for the costs from train accidents.
- We wonder who the GLB investors are in this new PRIVATE rail line. We feel there can be no foreign investors in the infrastructure of this GLB railroad. Investors must be U.S. citizens.
- We feel the farmland needed for the GLB rail line must be purchased in accordance with State and County contracts and cannot be obtained by eminent domain. In event the property owner is issued a fee or penalty for selling a very small acreage, that fee must be paid by the GLB investors.
- We object to the proposed GLB rail line because it removes farmland from the tax rolls forever. We worry about the loss of value of our farms on and near the rail line. The value of the entire Township property will be lowered. Farmland with rail tracks on it now or in the future is not desirable.

Reject the GLB proposal. Direct GLB to the three abandoned rail lines in southern Wisconsin. We won't object to that. (see enclosed article)

Sincerely,

Donald Friedo Hillmann

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Sweeney suggests rail route alternatives

County supervisor suggests using existing rail lines

By Catherine W. Idzerda
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JANESVILLE

Rerouting a proposed rail line proposed for eastern Rock County might reduce its impact on farmland and give a boost to local infrastructure, a Rock County Board member said.

County board member Al Sweeney and Boone County, Illinois, officials hope to send a letter to the federal Surface Transportation Board with alternatives to the controversial rail line proposed by the Great Lakes Basin Transportation. The line would start east of Milton and run south around Chicago to La Porte, Indiana.



Sweeney

Supporters say the new rail line would spur economic development and let trains avoid the congestion in the Chicago rail yards, which can bog down trains for up to 30 hours.

Opponents say the rail line would gobble up more than 585 acres of farmland, significantly delay emergency responders and radically alter the community.

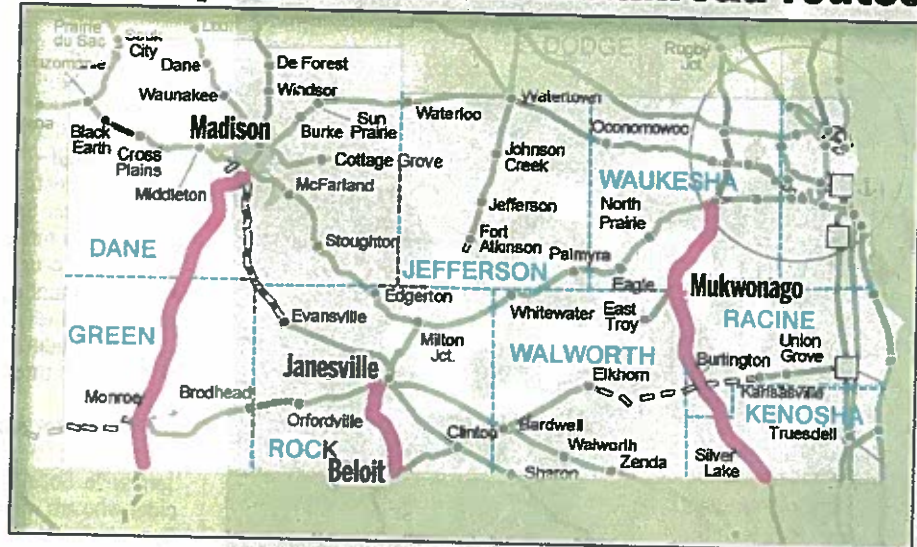
The Surface Transportation Board is taking comments on the proposed project until mid-June.

Sweeney, who also serves as chairman for the Rock River Rail Transit Commission, said he had talked to Boone County officials, but they not had come to an agreement about specific alternative routes.

The three alternate routes include:

- The Canadian National line that runs from Waukesha County south to Mukwonago, Burlington and Silver Lake. On the northern end, the tracks would have easy access to the Port of Milwaukee. Just south of the state line, the tracks would turn to pick up Union Pacific lines. Or new track would go west and then head south near Belvidere, Illinois.

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN Proposed alternative railroad routes



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The track would have to be upgraded. Sweeney said that this would be the most likely possibility.

- The Iowa, Chicago and Eastern Railroad that runs from Janesville south to Beloit.

This track would also have to be upgraded.

- The rails-to-trails path from Madison to Monroe. Sweeney said that although the rails might be gone, the infrastructure is still there.

"My concern is to take care of the freight coming out of Rock County," Sweeney said.

The newly proposed line would be a "blow through for freight from Canada," Sweeney said.

In a draft letter to the Surface Transportation Board, Sweeney recommends using already existing lines. Not only would it be more cost effective, but they would also be more in line with Boone and Rock counties comprehensive plans.

In Boone County, officials planned for industrial growth west of Belvidere. A transload facility, a place where freight is transferred from one form of transportation to another, was proposed by the Irene

Road/Interstate 90 interchange. From there, a rail spur to the route south would be more consistent with Boone County's plans, the draft letter says.

Would any of those options be feasible?

Jim Wilson, president of the Great Lakes Basin Railroad, said they are willing to look at any options. However, the company hoped to keep the line away from major population areas.

"We're trying not to run it through any communities," Wilson said.

"We want to have a safety corridor in case of a derailment, spill or a leak. If there is an issue, it's a lot easier to evacuate two or three families than several thousand people."

In designing the current proposed route, they tried to keep the rail line at least one-quarter to one-half mile from subdivisions.

Another reason for creating a new line is to prepare for the future, Wilson said.

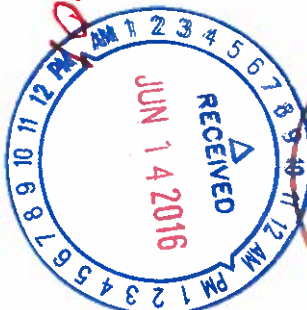
A 200-foot easement is planned for utilities, but Wilson said that they are "definitely interested" in seeing more light industry alongside the new railroad.

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