

July 7, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Navecky,

We are opposed to the Great Lakes Basin Railway (GLB) for the various reasons outlined in this document. The proposed GLB is set to run through what was once known as the Grand Kankakee Marsh aka The Everglades of the North until man came through in the name of progress, began draining it and developed it into highly productive farmland. Our property is located in Porter Township in Porter County and will be approximately one-quarter (1/4) mile from the proposed railway route.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The construction of a railroad through prime farmland would negatively impact the soil. The oils, fuels and chemicals just from the train itself would seep into the soil leading to the contamination of ground water and the land. Everyone in rural areas rely on the groundwater as a source of water for wells. We don't have treated water like in a town. Crops grown in this soil could also be contaminated with the oils, fuels and chemicals from the train. Additionally, if there is a derailment, any type of toxic liquids the train might be carrying and/or fuel from the train would contaminate the soil and groundwater and affect people and animals for miles since the water drains to the Kankakee River not the Great Lakes.

AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE

Lake and Porter Counties are the only two counties of the 92 counties in Indiana that require vehicles to be tested for emissions. According to <http://www.cleanaircarcheck.com>: "Cars and light-duty trucks contribute 30 - 50 percent of the pollutants that cause harmful ground-level ozone and also contribute significantly to the amount of air toxics and particulate matter in the environment. The Clean Air Car Check program identifies vehicles that emit harmful pollutants and once repaired, those vehicles' performance and fuel economy are improved, as is the air we breathe. Properly maintained vehicles also result in less contamination being released into the groundwater."

Obviously, adding up to 110 trains a day would increase the amount of pollutants in the air just from the fumes emitted from the train and would not help the air quality of a region that already has air quality problems. The introduction of this many trains to the area would leave a large carbon footprint that would contribute to climate change. If there were a derailment, the possibility of a chemical spill would leave a devastating effect on the air quality and could lead to people and animals getting sick and/or dying.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

It is a common fact that trains are loud even without horns sounding. The clankety-clack of a train traveling can be heard for miles. We can hear trains in Valparaiso, which is approximately nine miles from our home. The proposed rail line would be approximately a quarter-mile from our home. Clearly,

the sound would be noticeable to say the least. Any horns that might blare would increase the amount of noise emitted into the air and would be heard for miles. Multiply one train by 110 trains and the sound and vibrations would be unbearable to people, livestock and wildlife. Vibrations could lead to building foundations shifting and crumbling too.

In a recent sleep study, it was determined that “ Freight trains provoke HR accelerations during sleep, and the vibration characteristics of the trains are of special importance. In the long term, this may affect cardiovascular functioning of persons living close to railways.” Croy I, Smith MG, Persson Waye K. Effects of train noise and vibration on human heart rate during sleep: an experimental study. <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/3/5/e002655.abstract> Copy of study is included.

Our property consists of a wooded area and an approximately quarter-acre pond. The wildlife that lives in and near it would be harmed. The ecosystem includes but is not limited to bass, catfish, bluegill, frogs, blue herons, lizards, mallard ducks, red-winged blackbirds, bats, muskrats, mink, moles, voles, turtles, possums, raccoons, squirrels. Deer frequent the area too. The noise and vibrations from the 110 trains a day would definitely be a detriment the animals like muskrats, mink, moles and voles that tunnel in the ground. Loud noises also are a deterrent for red-winged blackbirds. There are many properties in this area that have similar property features, woods and ponds. So, this is not limited to only our property. There are at least three ponds on our road alone not to mention the nearby Ludington Ditch/creek where fish, blue heron, pheasants, turtles, deer and numerous other creatures live and thrive.

The construction of a 278-mile rail line running up to 110 trains a day would absolutely be devastating to the people, animals, communities and natural resources along the line. The decision of allowing the GLB to construct this giant railway would be a mistake that would be nearly impossible to undo. Decisions from more than a century ago forever changed the land; let's not go down the same path again.

Sincerely,

Miranda & Richard Serletic

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