

June 9, 2016

From: COBS Preservation Partnership

McNeal and Irene Roads

Kirkland, IL 60146

Mobile Phone: 708-702-0912

Email: irwin_berger@yahoo.com

To: Surface Transportation Board

Surface Transportation Board

395 E Street, SW

Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Surface Transportation Board Members,

The purpose of this letter is to provide the Board with reasons why the Great Lakes Basin LLC (GLBT) should be denied approval for the route it submitted to the Board in a letter dated March 7, 2016.

There are five main areas to consider on why the Board should deny the proposed GLBT proposal. First, did the GLBT provide the Surface Transportation Board with alternate routes that minimize the use of land from private landowners? Second, there are serious environmental issues that can have a major negative impact on surface water, ground water, damage to threatened and endangered plants and wildlife, and air pollution from diesel locomotive engines. Third, there are daily living issues such as increased noise, structural damage to buildings and pipelines from ground vibrations, and increased vehicle commuting times due to ground level railroad crossings. Forth, there are economic issues which have a negative impact for the local communities on the proposed route. Fifth, a private company should not be allowed to use eminent domain to take private property from landowners.

When the GLBT submitted its proposed route on March 7, 2016, it only included a map of a route that did not minimize the total number of miles in avoiding the greater Chicago and suburban area. The GLBT did not submit a route map that minimizes the amount of land from private landowners by using a combination of abandoned railroad right of ways and existing railroad routes. If the GLBT designed a route using abandoned and existing routes it would not have to acquire land from private landowners. This could also reduce the cost of designing the route as the GLBT would not have to purchase land and construct a new railroad route from scratch. By designing their route from scratch and not utilizing other railroad routes, they are effectively taking all of the profit themselves and not sharing revenue with other railroads. The Board should deny the proposal until the GLBT submits a new proposed route using abandoned railroad right of ways and existing railroad lines. For example, there is an abandoned CN&W right of way that goes south from Rockton, IL to Belvidere, IL. (please see the attached map for this abandoned right of way.) This route could then connect to existing rail lines in order to reach the final

destination near La Porte, IN (see the attached map of existing Illinois railroad routes for a possible route using existing track which is highlighted in yellow).

There are several important environmental issues which are reasons why the Board should deny the proposed route. It is likely the GLBT will be transporting toxic materials such as chemicals and petroleum products. As stated in its proposal, if 110 trains per day utilize the proposed route traveling at speeds up to 70 miles per hour (which is a very high speed for a freight train), it is likely at some point in time there will be a derailment with a possible toxic chemical spill. The proposed route will be going through the Kishwaukee, Rock, Lee, Fox, Des Plaines, and Kankakee watershed areas in Illinois where a toxic spill could harm water quality, aquatic wildlife, and wetland plants. A toxic spill could also do harm to drinking water provided by aquifers. A good portion of the proposed route goes from southern Wisconsin through northern Illinois directly over the Troy Bedrock Valley Aquifer. The Troy Valley Aquifer is the main source of drinking water for Boone County Illinois and northwest DeKalb County Illinois (see the attached Illinois drinking water map and Boone County Troy Valley Aquifer map). If a toxic spill got in to the groundwater of this aquifer, it would make the water from the aquifer undrinkable and harm the people using drinking water from this aquifer. The proposed route would disrupt and do possible harm to threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species. For example, in Boone County, Illinois there are 13 threatened and endangered species (see the attached list of Boone County threatened and endangered species on page 5). According to the Illinois Heritage Database, Boone County, Illinois has 5 endangered species which are the Speckled Alder, Blanding's Turtle, Blacknose Shiner, Red-berried Elder, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services lists the Indiana bat as endangered and the Northern long-eared bat and Eastern prairie-fringed orchid as threatened in Boone County. In the local area of Boone County near the COBS Preservation Partnership (80 acres of a combination of wetlands and hardwood forest set aside for wildlife preservation), there are no major railroads of the magnitude proposed by the GLBT. The environment around the COBS property is peaceful with little car and truck traffic and no nearby railroad traffic. The proposed GLBT plan calls for as many as 110 trains per day or a train passing by about every 13 minutes. Over time, the amount of diesel pollutants from this amount of rail traffic would be significant to an area that has very little vehicular pollutants. Even though the GLBT plans to reduce pollutants as much as possible, this amount of rail traffic over time would materially reduce the air quality near the proposed route.

The GLBT proposed route would impact the daily living of the residents near the route. One issue that would impact the daily life of nearby residents is the noise pollution from the trains. The current U.S. law regarding train noise pollution allows for 88 decibels of noise at 100 feet from the source for trains traveling at 45 miles per hour or less and 93 decibels for trains traveling at greater than 45 miles per hour (although these are the noise standards according to U.S. law, noise levels above 87 decibels can be damaging to the hearing of most people). Many hearing experts state that noise above 85 decibels can be harmful to hearing (see the attached noise guidelines from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association). The STB uses the DNL descriptor (day-night average sound level) to assess the noise from railroads that transport freight. Like the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Railroad Administration, the STB terms the noise level represented by a DNL of 65 decibels as "severe impact." The noise from horns blown near grade level railroad crossings and the high pitched screeching sound from the metal wheels on the metal track would disrupt the peaceful rural setting for those who own property near the proposed route. Since the noise level from the GLBT trains would exceed the 65 DNL standard used by the STB, the proposed GLBT railroad would exceed the STB's standard for peace and quiet for people living near the proposed route (see the attached criteria for the assessment of noise annoyance on page 134). Another issue is the vibration through the ground from long freight trains traveling as fast as 70 miles per hour. Scientific studies on the vibrations caused by freight trains has

shown that these vibrations can cause structural damage to buildings, foundations, and windows to eventually crack them from the constant vibrations. Also, natural gas and oil pipelines just below the surface near the route could be damaged from the vibrations. For example, a building 200 feet from the track with a freight train traveling at 45 miles per hour would experience 76 vibration decibels which would be an annoyance to any residents and over time could cause structural damage to buildings (such as cracking foundations). For those with homes near the proposed route, they will be able to feel the vibrations in the floors of their homes when the trains pass by. To save money, it is likely that the GLBT will mostly be using ground crossings, especially in rural areas, which would be disruptive to vehicular traffic. The high frequency and long length of the proposed trains would dramatically increase travel times in many areas that do not have this type of vehicular traffic disruption. Emergency vehicles and school buses would especially be negatively affected by the frequent disruption from long freight trains. The proposed route will cause various health issues to local residents living near the tracks such as sleep deprivation due to the noise and vibrations. Finally, the noise, air, and vibration pollution will lower property values for all property owners near the proposed route. Most properties near the route will see an immediate devaluation from current prices as the noise and vibrations from the trains will change a quiet and pristine environment to one which has noise, air, and vibration pollution as long as the trains continue to run.

The GLBT proposal stresses the major positive economic benefits of the project. The proposal fails to state what the economic benefits will be for each local area the route passes through. The GLBT has estimated it will create about 250 to 500 permanent jobs. But most of these jobs would be in the Manteno area where the proposed main switching yard will be located along with a lesser amount of permanent jobs in smaller switching areas. For Boone County, the only jobs created would involve the installation of new track inside the county. These jobs would only last for a year or two. There would be no long term economic benefit to Boone County, but it would receive long term excess noise, air, and vibration pollution and the dangers of a possible toxic spill.

The GLBT will be requesting that the STB grant eminent domain rights in order to acquire land needed to build the railroad. A private company, such as an LLC, should not be allowed to use eminent domain to take private property from landowners (there should be no eminent domain for private gain). Only federal, state, and local governments should be able to use eminent domain for projects the government sponsors and pays for which is for the public good. A private company should not be able to use eminent domain solely for the benefit of its investors which will receive profits from the operation of the railroad. This is not a government sponsored project for the public good.

On a different note, the members of COBS Preservation Partnership were very disappointed in how the GLBT went about putting together their proposal and disseminating the information about it to the local communities near the proposed route. It appears that the GLBT took the easy way out by submitting their plan on March 7, 2016 to the STB without doing as much research that needed to be done before submitting proposal. We were not able to find any proposed routes that used abandoned and existing railroad lines as an alternative to the proposed route. We did find that a previous proposed route going through Winnebago County that was abandoned due to wetland environmental issues (see the Feb. 8, 2015 article in the Walworth County, WI GazetteXtra which shows a route map going through Winnebago County) and then the current route was proposed in its place going through Boone County. The GazetteXtra article stated that the GLBT had hired AECOM, an engineering design company, to prepare a proposal for the STB (the GLBT had not submitted anything to the STB as of Feb. 8, 2015). From the web meeting held on April 27, 2016 we found out from two participants that their properties would be cut in half from the proposed route. The GLBT could have used Plat maps, which show

property ownership and boundaries, that its route would cause major problems for some landowners. This problem could have been avoided ahead of time with better research on property boundaries. It also appears that the GLBT did not know much about potential disruption to wetlands and drinking water as its proposed route runs directly through several wetland watersheds and a portion of the route is directly above the Troy Bedrock Valley Aquifer. These environmental issues could have been prevented with better research before the proposal was submitted. If the GLBT would have contacted local experts (such as local water, soil, and land conservation departments), a much better route could have been proposed to avoid potential environmental issues. Finally, GLBT did a poor job of informing local residents and landowners of the proposed project. Although the plan was submitted on March 7, many local residents and landowners did not find out about this proposal until just before the local meetings about the project were held in April. This did not give the local residents and landowners much time to prepare for these meetings. The information about the proposal should have been made known by the GLBT to local residents well before the plan was submitted to the STB (as mentioned above, the GLBT was already planning a proposal as of February 2015). The information could have been disseminated through local newspapers and television stations (using a public relations campaign) to all local communities near the proposed route. Even many local state representatives did not know about the project (see the attached article regarding Illinois State Senator Sue Rezin). The article states “she and her office were never notified about the proposed GLBT project.” The GLBT should have notified all state representatives from the affected areas in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana before submitting their proposal. This is another sign of poor management before the proposal was filed. It appears the GLBT was not open to reporting their project to the public in the early stages of the proposal and has been trying to push their project through to get approval as quickly as possible. This lack of providing information and notification was done intentionally to reduce any anti-GLBT sentiment. It appears the GLBT was trying to sneak its proposal through with as little publicity as possible instead of being upfront with the public from the beginning. The members of COBS were extremely disappointed with the manner in which the information about the GLBT proposal was disseminated to the public.

Last of all, no LLC should be able to own a railroad route that uses eminent domain and potentially pollute regional water sources and have a negative environmental impact. If the owners of the railroad route are not personally willing to risk their liability why should landowners adjacent and near the route risk their quality of life for this project.

The COBS Preservation Partnership respectfully submits this letter and the supporting documents with specific reasons why the GLBT proposal should be denied. We hope that you will consider the reasons brought up in this letter in making your final decision.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irwin Berger". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Irwin Berger (On Behalf of the COBS Preservation Partnership)

ILLINOIS RAILROAD MAP 2012

PRODUCED BY THE
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

IN COOPERATION WITH
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION



Mapping & Information Systems

DATA SOURCES:
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC DATA

THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND ITS DATA SOURCES PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY. THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DOES NOT WARRANT THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN. THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DOES NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY DAMAGE, INCLUDING REASONABLE ATTORNEY'S FEES, ARISING OUT OF OR IN CONNECTION WITH THE USE OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN. THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DOES NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY DAMAGE, INCLUDING REASONABLE ATTORNEY'S FEES, ARISING OUT OF OR IN CONNECTION WITH THE USE OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN.

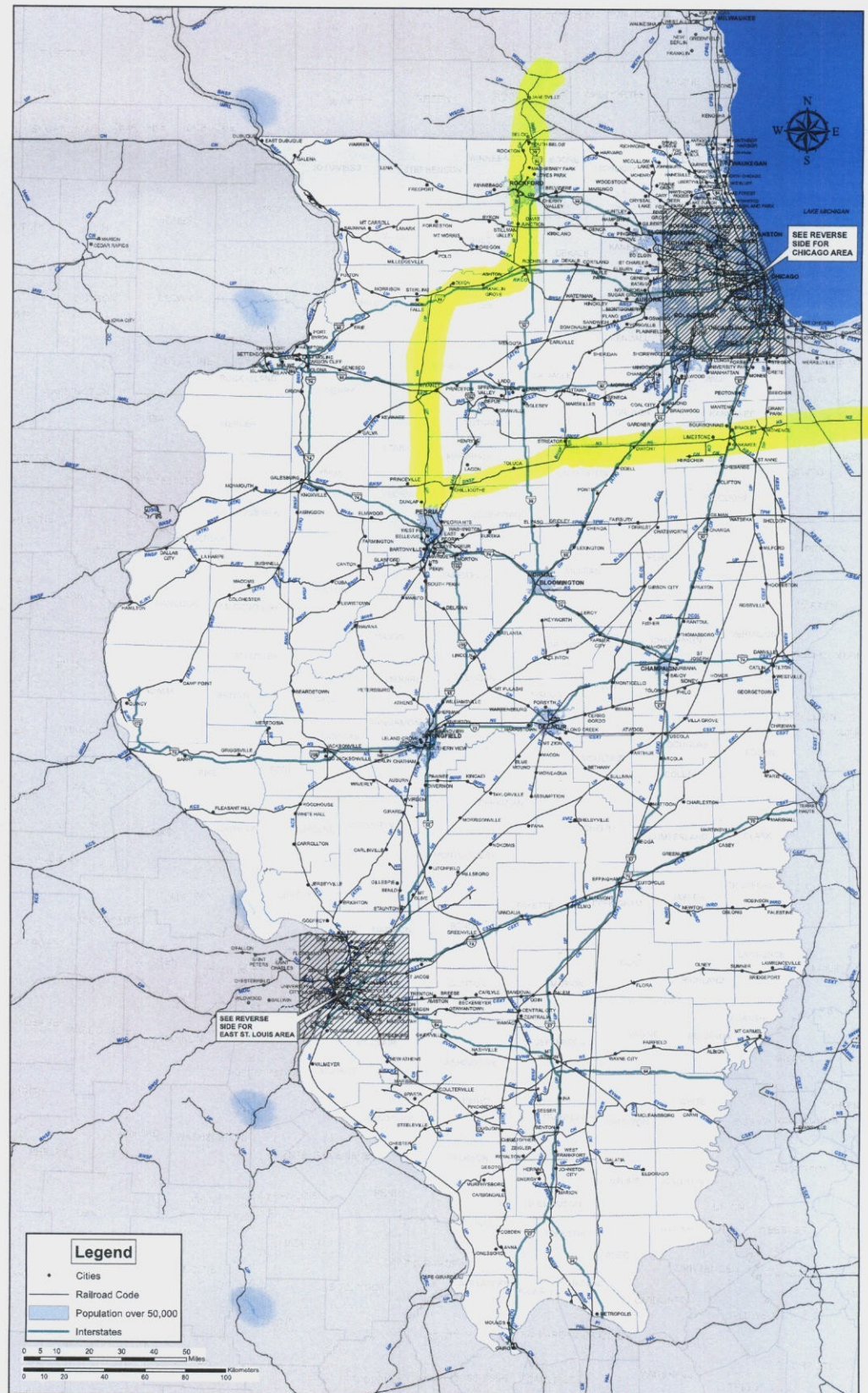
SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR
CHICAGO AREA
&
EAST ST. LOUIS

RAILROADS

Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation)	ATK
Burlington Northern Ry.	BNRY
Buena Vista Connecting Railroad Co.	BVCL
BNF Ry. Co.	BNF
Bel Ry. Co. of Chicago	BRC
Ill. State Development Agency, St. Louis office Mainline	CDVO
Chicago-Chicago R.R. Corp.	CFC
Chicago, Ft. Wayne & Eastern Railroad Co.	CFE
Canadian National Ry.	CN
Chesapeake & Eastern R.R.	CEB
Canadian Pacific Ry. Co.	CP
Chicago, Peoria & Western Ry.	GPW
Chicago and North Western Ry.	C&N
Chicago South Shore & South Bend R.R.	CSB
CSX Transportation, Inc.	CSX
Chicago Terminal Railroad	CTM
Coffey and Western R.R.	COWR
DeKalb Junction Ry. Co.	DT
Elliott R.R. Co.	ERR
Eastern Illinois R.R. Co.	ERIC
Everett Western Railway, Inc.	EWRI
Iron Interlake R.R., Ltd.	IWR
Indiana Harbor Belt R.R. Co.	IHB
Illinois & Michigan R.R. Co.	IMR
The Indiana Rail Road Co.	IRR
Illinois R.R. Co.	IR
Illinois Western R.R.	IWR
Illinois & Eastern R.R. Co.	IER
Kankakee, Beardsville and Southern R.R. Co.	KBSR
Kankakee City Southern Ry. Co.	KCS
Kankakee Junction Ry.	KJR
Kankakee Regional Port District	KRPD
Manufacturers' Junction Ry. Co.	MJ
Northwest & Regional Commuter Rail Corp., c/o METRA	NRC
Northwestern Ry. Co.	NW
Port Harbor Railroad (Respondent)	PHRR
Porter Industrial Ry. Co.	PIR
Richton R.R. Co.	RRC
Riverport Railroad	RVR
South Chicago & Indiana Harbor Ry. Co.	SCI
Shelbyville Industrial Railroad	SIR
Shoreland Terminal Ry. Co., Inc.	STR
Talbot, Peoria & Western Ry. Corp.	TPW
Terminal R.R. Association of St. Louis	TRRA
Tipton & Peoria R.R.	TPIR
Union Pacific R.R.	UP
Verona R.R. Co.	VRR
Winona & Southern R.R. Co.	WSR

* Due to congested areas on the map, some rail lines may not be displayed.
** Passenger/commuter rail lines

Illinois Amtrak Routes



Illinois State Water Survey

Illinois Community Water Supply Wells

- Communities
- County Seats
- Sand and Gravel Wells
- Shallow Bedrock Wells
- Deep Bedrock Wells
- Major Sand and Gravel Aquifers
- Major Shallow Bedrock Aquifers (< 500 feet)
- Major Deep Bedrock Aquifers (> 500 feet)

Illinois has abundant buried groundwater reserves that supply millions of gallons of groundwater per day for public, agricultural, and industrial-commercial use. These aquifers are extensively distributed throughout the state. Fortunately, surface water as a combination of precipitation and surface water is available to meet required needs in most cases where groundwater resources are depleted.

This map depicts community water supply wells in relation to the major aquifer systems in Illinois. A community water supply is defined as "a public water system which serves at least 15 service connections used by residents or regularly serves at least 25 residents for at least 60 days per year." Only community wells classified as active in the 2000 Public Industrial-Commercial Survey Database for the Year 2000 are shown.

Major aquifers are capable of yielding at least 10 gallons per minute to wells and cover at least 10 square miles. Areas delineated indicate three types of major aquifers: sand and gravel, shallow bedrock (deeper than the first of ground surface, but deep bedrock (deeper than 700 feet from ground surface). Unlike the boundaries of the other aquifers, the southern boundary of the deep bedrock is delineated across central Illinois as an estimated 1,200 wellheads per line based on bedrock elevation data. This is not a physical boundary. Colored gradients represent the aquifer in which the well is completed: sand and gravel, shallow bedrock, or deep bedrock. However, not all community wells are located within a major aquifer. Wells classified as deep bedrock may also draw water from the shallow bedrock aquifer.

This map was developed by the Environmental Protection Trust Fund and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The technical content of the map is the responsibility of the authors. The user assumes all liability for the interpretation and use of the map.

Legend: Contour Lines (1000' projection based on standard parallels 39° and 41°)

MODIFIED GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM THEMES

Well Location
Illinois State Water Survey, Illinois Water Inventory Program 1979 - 2003.
Public Industrial-Commercial Survey (PICIS) selected data for year 2000.
Scale 1:24,000.

Aquifers
Illinois State Geological Survey 1994. Scale 1:500,000.

Contour Lines
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Geographic Information System, 1995. Point locations are approximately for center of the communities.
Scale 1:500,000.

ILLINOIS
State Water Survey (2006)

David W. Williams, Chief
Illinois State Water Survey
1110 South University Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801
217/244-6458

Illinois Water Inventory Program
http://www.illinois.gov/water
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
http://dnr.state.il.us

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
http://uiuc.edu
H. Allen Williams and Kenneth J. Hinkle
2003; Katherine J. Williams and Timothy P. Boyd

Scale: 1:250,000 (1 inch = approximately 12 miles)
0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles

MAP SERIES 2006 - 01

Illinois State Water Survey



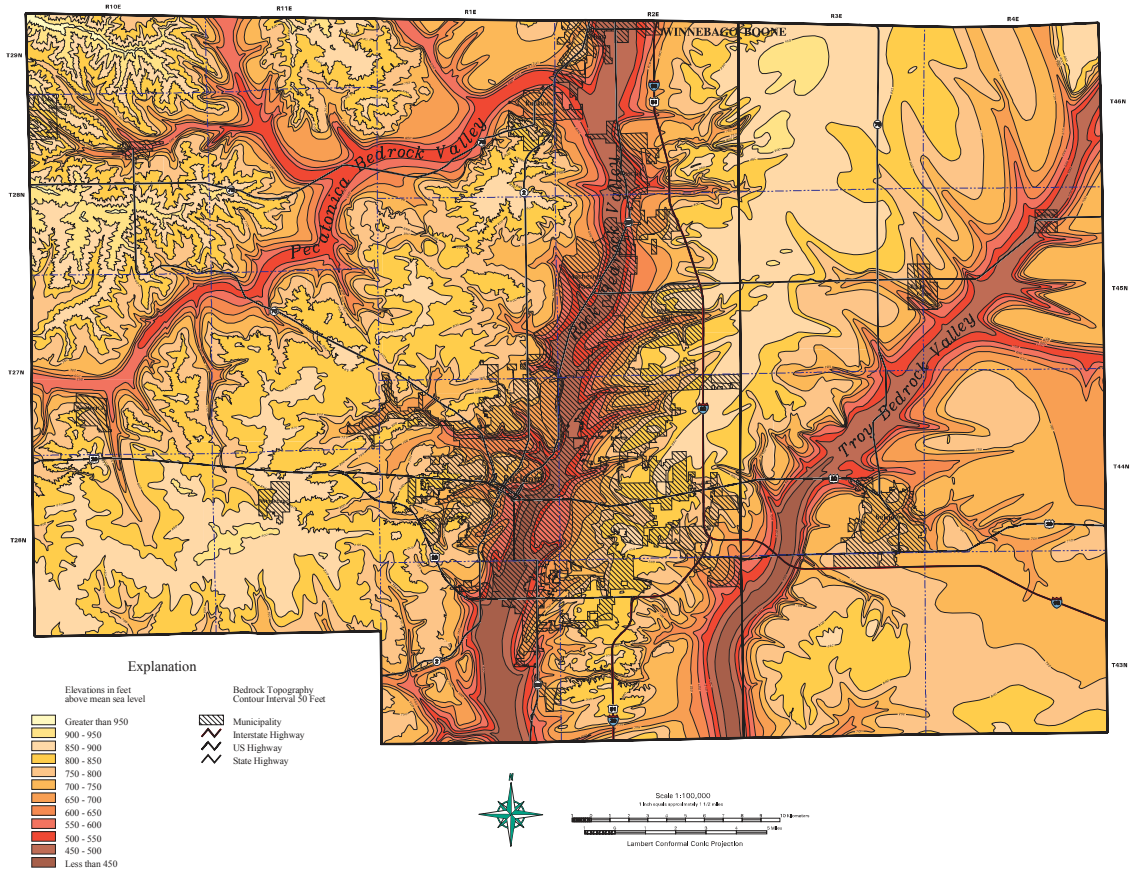


State of Illinois
Department of Natural Resources

Bedrock Topography of Boone and Winnebago Counties, Illinois

Christopher S. McGarry
(modified from A.N. Stecyk, 1984)
2000

Illinois State Geological Survey
William W. Stein, Chief
Champaign



The map of bedrock topography shows the elevation of the top surface of the consolidated rocks that lie at or beneath the land surface. Bedrock topography illustrates pre-glacial topographic features of the two-county study area. In northwest Winnebago County, there is little difference between the land surface and bedrock surface in the uplands; a 0 to 5 m (16 ft.) thick veneer of glacial till and/or loess overlying near-surface bedrock generally characterizes these areas. In contrast, the bedrock surface is more than 100 m (328 ft.) below the land surface in deep bedrock valleys. The Rock, Troy, and Pecatonica bedrock valleys are clearly discernable on the bedrock topography map. These valleys were incised prior to glaciation in the region and are now filled with glaciofluvial sediments, primarily sand and gravel. Although the Rock and Pecatonica bedrock valleys presently contain rivers bearing the same names, the Troy bedrock valley has no expression at the land surface today. Unconsolidated Quaternary deposits are generally thicker toward the east, resulting in very few bedrock exposures in Boone County.

This map was created to assist in determining the subtopographic pattern of bedrock units (McGarry, 2000). Stecyk's (1983) map of the bedrock topography was edited to more accurately reflect the variations in topography in the northwest portion of Winnebago County, based on field mapping, and to account for well data that were not available in 1983. Bedrock is very near the land surface in the northwest portion of the study area, but Stecyk's (1983) map showed areas where the bedrock surface was more than 15 m (50 ft.) below the land surface. Land surface elevations from USGS topographic quadrangles were used to modify the bedrock topography map to reflect shallow bedrock. In areas where new well data indicated a difference in bedrock elevation from that mapped by Stecyk, the map was altered to reflect the new data. Overall, about 60% of the original map was altered.

Data used to create this map were compiled from ISGS well logs, Illinois Department of Transportation bearings, United States Department of Agriculture soil survey maps, United States Geological Survey 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle maps, and field observations.

References:

- McGarry, C.S. (2000) Bedrock Geology of Boone and Winnebago Counties, Illinois: Illinois State Geological Survey, Open File Series 2000- 3, scale 1:100,000.
- Stecyk, A.N. (1983) Topography of the Bedrock Surface of Boone and Winnebago Counties: Illinois State Geological Survey, 1:62,500.



Preparation of this map by the Illinois State Geological Survey was supported, in part, by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Trust Fund. The map is part of a study to characterize the stratigraphy and structural geology of the Galena-Platteville Aquifer in Boone and Winnebago Counties. Maps produced for this study are intended for regional aquifer protection and land use planning purposes. More detailed mapping is needed for site specific considerations. This map has been reviewed for scientific accuracy and has been edited to meet the quality standards of maps in the ISGS Map Series.