

Bennett Construction, inc.

GENERAL CONTRACTORS



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April 9, 2017

Surface Transportation Board
Kenneth Blodgett
395 E Street NW
Washington D.C. 20423-0001

Re: #FB 35952

Dear Mr. Blodgett;

This is in regard to the Great Lakes Basin Railroad request to approve a plan to place a railroad in my community. We are strongly opposed to this plan.

We live a few hundred feet from the proposed railroad bed. We live in a quiet neighborhood on the edge of Rockford, Illinois. The neighborhood is comprised of a number of large homes on wooded acreage. The proposed route would create excessive noise and traffic hazards, and would unduly restrict our access to our local schools, fire and ambulance services, and other public services. Farmers will lose access to not only their fields and out buildings, but access to the roads and bridges built with their tax dollars.

The Great Lakes Basin Railroad abruptly altered their proposed route through Boone County, Illinois long after citizens of Winnebago County had formal access to hearings or comment. This strikes me as a strategic decision aimed at silencing community input. We will not be ignored.

The proposed route cuts through and impairs both the Kishwaukee River and Racoon Creek Watershed which includes dedicated wetlands like Nygren Wetlands in Rockton Township, Illinois. It also would cut across and impair or destroy access to the recently improved Pecatonica Prairie Path, a bike trail built using public monies. That trail ties into hundreds of miles of connecting bike trails in Illinois and Wisconsin. It is a source of tourism dollars and community recreation.

How will this high-speed railroad cross U.S. Highway 20? Will the owners build a bridge? Nobody has addressed this issue. This is a vital four lane east-west highway. People living west of Rockford use this road to access all three major hospitals located in Rockford. Will people die because a train has blocked this vital artery?

We live less than a mile from a CN railroad line. We co-exist with that railroad in part because there is limited and slow speed traffic on it. Recently our community suffered a death at the grade crossing for the local grain elevator. I shudder to think the carnage which awaits our community if the Great Lakes Basin Railroad is allowed to turn our quiet rural-suburban community into a high-speed rail expressway with trains whizzing by at 60 miles an hour up to 5 times per hour.

There is zero benefit for myself or my community in this project. My home will lose its value. My safety will be endangered. The natural beauty of this area will be forever destroyed. Job creation will be negligible. My community has enough rail which is underutilized and poorly maintained. There simply is no need for more. Use what exists!

I invested in Winnebago County, Illinois long before this railroad turned its sights on this community. Please say NO to the Great Lakes Basin Railroad.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod Bennett". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Rod" and last name "Bennett" clearly legible.

Rod Bennett

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