

June 10, 2016

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
ATTN: Docket No. FD35952
395 E. Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky:

I attended the Great Lake Basin Railroad Scoping Meeting, on 4/14/16, at the Civic Auditorium, in La Porte IN.

Similar to the one held on Wednesday night in Wanatah, IN, there were several hundred people were present—approaching standing room only.

Basically, when those present were polled, virtually 100 % were opposed to the project.

Very knowledgeable, very articulate representatives of agricultural (farmer) community and environmental community spoke, presenting a variety of well-stated facts for opposing the project.

But in addition to the many sound rural-based agricultural and environmental reasons that the audience presented for not liking the project, I would like to express here an urban-based reason:

Although the City of La Porte was clearly a few miles east of the proposed construction area, this city would absolutely be drawn into the activities and effects of such a project. If, for example, it would be expected that 110 trains per day were to travel this route, The City of La Porte would unquestionably be forced into accommodating such levels of train traffic right through the heart of its downtown. Otherwise, if the city it did not do this, it would create a severe “bottleneck” that would substantially delay these trains on their way to their “timely” destinations.

Consequently, the potential increase in rail traffic through the downtown of the City of La Porte that would result from this project, would be to be enormous!

A HUGE concern with that would be the greatly-escalated probability of a hazardous materials accidents—potentially requiring evacuations—and severely impacting both the downtown to lying to the south of the Norfolk Southern tracks and the lakes, parks, commercial districts and residential neighborhoods (including my own), lying to the north. The attached Emergency Mgmt. Dept. map shows the ½ (blue) and 1 mile (red) buffers around the railroads of the City of La Porte, relevant to such potential spill-related accidents.

This project would cause the potential for such train accidents involving vehicles, pedestrians, etc. to skyrocket!

In the future, would it even be realistically possible, for example, to travel by foot or vehicle the entire length—north to south—of Madison St.? Not likely. Realistically, under the conditions slated for this project, this would simply not be possible! And this consequent effective barrier would be worse in many respects for this city than if a giant wall had been constructed through town, similar to the one that was built between Israeli and Palestinian sectors, in the Middle East.

All that is to say nothing about the increased levels of health-impairing pollution from diesel, heavy metals, etc. that would inevitably chronically accumulate in this central area of the town, from such a level of train traffic. Environmental-related diseases (cancer, heart disease, emphysema, etc.) would most assuredly increase dramatically among those who live and/or work in La Porte. That in turn could make La Porte a VERY miserable, undesirable place to be!

Additionally over time, the chronic, continuous vibrations from 110 trains a day could do serious damage to the downtown buildings that the City of La Porte and civic organizations like Indiana Landmarks, People Engaged-in Preservation (PEP), and others (i.e., private investors) are seeking to restore.

This project is plainly a nonsensical idea—without even any real financial backing—that is clearly a VERY BAD FIT for the City of La Porte. This is the case even without considering all of those other valid reasons noted at the above meeting, for why it would also be a VERY BAD FIT for rural La Porte County—and for Porter and Lake counties, as well!

Consequently, I strongly recommend that this nonsensical project be rejected outright by the STB and dismissed without further consideration.

Very Sincerely,



Robert J. Boklund, M.S.E.S

Former Administrator for the La Porte County Health Dept. (1990-1998)

and

Very Concerned La Porte City Resident

LPCO RR HALF MILE & MILE BUFFER

City of
La Porte

