ILLINOIS

DEMOCRATIC WHIP

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510-1304

June 8, 2017

243728

ENTERED

The Honorable Ann Begeman Chairman Surface Transportation Board 395 E Street, SW Washington DC 20423

Office of Proceedings June 8, 2017 Part of Public Record

Dear Chairman Begeman:

I am writing to express concern about the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line project. This project, which would create a new rail line around the Chicago area, would cross 261 miles, including three states and thousands of acres of farmland.

While there needs to be a continued discussion about how to reduce rail congestion in Chicago and increase capacity to meet future needs, this should not come at the expense of farmland, property owners, or the environment. Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern have stated they do not plan to use the proposed rail line while four other Class 1 railroads in the region have not publicly supported the project, bringing into question the demand and need for an additional rail line.

Additionally, I am concerned about the impact this proposal could have on farmers who could have restricted access to fields or may need to sell portions of farmland. Farming serves as an economic engine for the entire region, and the consequences this project may have on the regional economy must be clearly identified and addressed. I also encourage the STB to consider the impacts that hazardous cargo spills could have on residents and wildlife in the region. The costs to local residents and businesses should not outweigh the potential benefits of the proposed rail project.

For these reasons, I have serious reservations about this proposal as it currently stands. I strongly encourage the STB to consider the impact this proposal will have on farmland and communities in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin United States Senator

711 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304 (202) 224-2152 VRS (202) 540-9782 230 SOUTH DEARBORN, 38TH FLOOR CHICAGO, IL 60604 (312) 353-4952 525 SOUTH EIGHTH STREET SPRINGFIELD, IL 62703 (217) 492–4062 1504 THIRD AVENUE SUITE 227 ROCK ISLAND, IL 61201 (309) 786-5173 PAUL SIMON FEDERAL BUILDING 250 W. CHERRY STREET SUITE 115–D CARBONDALE, IL 62901 (618) 351–1122

durbin.senate.gov

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