

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304

June 8, 2017

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

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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