



OGLE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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Mr. Dave Navecky

Surface Transportation Board

Docket No. FB 35952

395 E Street SW

Washington, DC 20423-0001

Submitted as Public Comment Regarding Proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Project

The Ogle County Farm Bureau appreciates the opportunity to submit this written comment to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) regarding the proposed Great Lakes Basin (GLB) Rail Project. Ogle County Farm Bureau is a non-profit voluntary membership organization representing over 4600 member families. Many of those families may be directly, or indirectly, impacted by this project.

While we realize that rail congestion through and around Chicago is a major issue we ask the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to give full review to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad project, and deny the Great Lakes Basin Railroad an exemption from that review should it be requested.

We, as do others, have various questions pertaining to the need for this project and need the STB to act as an independent arbiter to find those answers. The scope and magnitude of this project is considerable as it is the largest rail project to be proposed in the United States in over 125 years.

While this project will move a considerable amount of freight, estimated at 110 trains per day; and will no doubt move those goods around Chicago with the potential to reduce train traffic; we have questions as to its need. These questions are a direct result of the Amtrak Gateway Chicago Area Blue Ribbon Panel who released a report in 2015 with recommendations for reducing Chicago Area Rail Congestion, and a proposed new rail line was not part of those recommendations. So we have questions whether the GLB is the right solution for Chicago Area rail congestion.

We have questions on the impact this project will have for Ogle County. In many instances the proposed route creates severed farm parcels. While we understand no route will be perfect we question why the proposed route could not more clearly follow existing roadways and section lines. The scope of the project will impact an estimated 1200 acres of farmland in Ogle County. Before such an impact can be executed on the landowners in the corridor we must be sure that this project has exhausted all avenues in detailing the final route. This is another reason why the STB needs to give full review on this project.

Various other questions remain as to the environmental impacts regarding drainage, waterways and other issues. A full review by the STB will provide clear and definitive answers to those questions.

Many residents also have concerns over public health and safety. Will at-grade crossings provide adequate protections to avoid accidents? Will this project impede first responders in their duties? The STB needs to fully examine these in their considerations.

At this point in time the Ogle County Farm Bureau seeks answers to these questions to better determine the validity of the GLB Railroad project. GLB included a 50 foot utility corridor as part of the railroad project. GLB is not a public utility and the STB must exclude any non-railroad uses from its consideration. Should the GLB at any time request the authority to exercise eminent domain in this project we will adamantly oppose that authority.

We urge the STB to do its due diligence and conduct a full review of the GLB rail project, to find the answers to the questions and to make a proper recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Duncan', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian Duncan, President

Ogle County Farm Bureau

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