



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

September 29, 2016

Ms. Victoria Rutson  
Surface Transportation Board  
Office of Environmental Analysis  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Ms. Rutson,

As elected representatives in Southern Wisconsin, we write to request that an additional 60-day public comment period be opened for citizens to submit concerns regarding the new rail line route proposed by Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. (GLBT). Because of the substantial route change in Wisconsin published last week, we believe the newly affected residents of Rock County deserve to be heard. We also request that you hold at least one additional public informational meeting, in or near Beloit, WI, before or during the new public comment period.

According to GLBT, the proposed rail line would begin in La Porte, Indiana, extend through Illinois and terminate in Milton, Wisconsin. The original plan proposed the rail line to travel through Wisconsin a few miles east of the Village of Clinton. However, on September 20, GLBT submitted a new alternative route that significantly changed the affected areas in Wisconsin. The new proposed route travels north on the west side of the City of Beloit, before crossing to the east between Beloit and Janesville. This new route is almost 15 miles west from the original proposed line.

Earlier this year, the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) held ten public meetings throughout the Midwest, with one in Janesville, WI. These public meetings were, according to the OEA website, meant to ensure "interested parties had opportunities to learn more about the project and to convey oral comments."

By changing the route of the proposed rail line, GLBT significantly altered who the interested parties were in Wisconsin. The citizens and groups who provided comment earlier this year may no longer be directly affected by the route. Similarly, people whose homes, farms, and businesses lie to the west of Beloit will now be directly affected by the new route. These residents may not have considered themselves interested parties under the original route, and therefore did not provide comment on the route's impact. Likewise, the comments on the original line's route in Wisconsin may no longer be relevant to the actual impact of the proposed route.

OEA opened a 60-day public comment period on the Draft Scope of Study on March 18, 2016. Following two extensions, the comment period ended on July 15, 2016. In that time, OEA

received over 3,500 comments according to your July 5 letter to Jay Johnson. Clearly, the public has serious concerns about the project. We believe more will voice their opinions if given the opportunity.

We are sure you understand that the change in route location will have a major impact on our constituents. We believe that the members of the public who are newly affected should be offered a chance to learn more about the project and to make their voices heard on the potential impacts of GLBT's rail line. This is why we are requesting you hold an additional public meeting and open an additional 60 days of public comment. This would offer our constituents the opportunity to investigate the route and make known their questions and concerns.

Thank you for considering our request, and we look forward to working with you on a solution that works for all parties involved.

Sincerely,



State Rep. Mark Spreitzer  
45<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



State Sen. Janis Ringhand  
15<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Cc: Jay Johnson, Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc  
Congressman Mark Pocan  
U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senator Ron Johnson