

El-22618

Rochelle Scoping Mtg, 4-20-16

Dear Surface Transportation Board:

I am enclosing the train route so you can associate the pictures with the proposed route.

I am also enclosing a newspaper article concerning the opposition to the rail route. We were not informed of the proposal until March 23, 2016! At the meeting over five hundred farmers attended, so the problems facing me also will face them.

Please understand how the railroad will significantly change our rural lives - not to the better!

Sincerely,

Jan Aystgen
April 23, 2016

Group criticizes rail route

'We don't want that here,' opponent says

ROB EARNSHAW ROB.EARNSHAW@NWI.COM, (219) 548-4332

VALPARAISO — A meeting held by a newly formed opposition group to a proposed \$8 billion, 27.8-mile Chicago rail line that would cut through Porter County drew about 500 people Thursday to Morgan Township High School's gym.

Residents Against the Invasion of Land by Eminent Domain is made up of politicians, farmers, business people and property holders, spokeswoman Kathleen Honl said.

"This is what the community looks like when we all band together," Honl said.

RAILED is opposed to a proposal by Great Lakes Basin Transportation for a Chicago bypass rail line running from Milton, Wisconsin, to LaPorte. Great Lakes said it will offer freight trains a route around congested lines through Chicago.

The train would pass south of Lowell and end cut through the southern portion of Porter County, where it would also cut through two farms that belong to Aaron Freyenberger's family.

Freyenberger said the rail line would "completely change" the county's farming area.

One of those speaking at the meeting was Bob Kauffman, who said the train would be nearly 200 feet from his front door.

"They're going through our prime farm ground and they're putting money ahead of public safety," he said.

Kauffman said the rail line would be just a quarter mile from Morgan Township High School and on it will be rail cars hauling toxic chemicals.

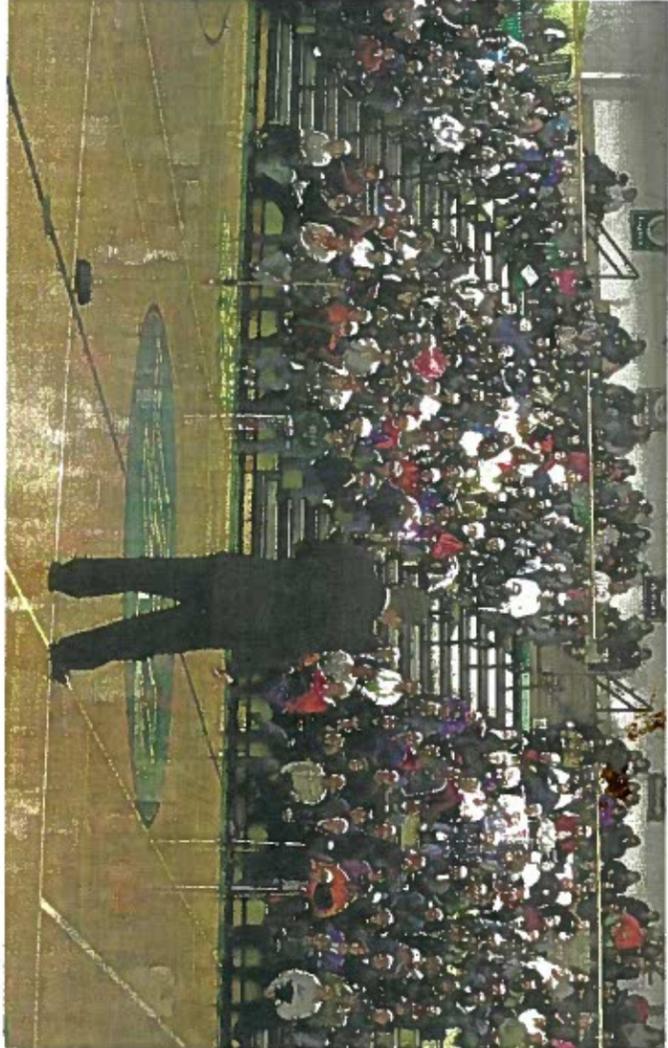
"We don't want that here," he said.

Kauffman also said a derailment would contaminate drinking water since most people near the route rely on wells. He also said firefighters aren't equipped to handle a train derailment fire.

The rail line, Kauffman said, also would lead to an increase in accidents, extended bus travel times for students and an extension of emergency response times.

The line being proposed could accommodate the carry capacity of 110 freight trains a day, although Frank Patton, founder and managing partner of Great Lakes Basin Transportation Inc., has said they're financial projections "are nowhere near that number." Kauffman said Patton has no train experience and is "an IT guy."

The Porter County Board of Commissioners also opposes the proposed rail line, and Lake County Commissioner Gerry Scheub has stated he opposes the route as it is now planned through



JONATHAN MIANO, THE TIMES
Kauffman voices his concerns about a rail route through rural lands at a meeting of a newly formed group against the proposed Great Lake Basin Transportation freight railroad Thursday at Morgan Township High School.



JONATHAN MIANO, THE TIMES
Local residents gather in a lunchroom for a meeting hosted by RAILED, a newly formed group against the proposed Great Lake Basin Transportation freight railroad, Thursday at Morgan Township High School in Valparaiso. People gathered in the school's lunchroom but the meeting was moved to the gym because the crowd was too large.

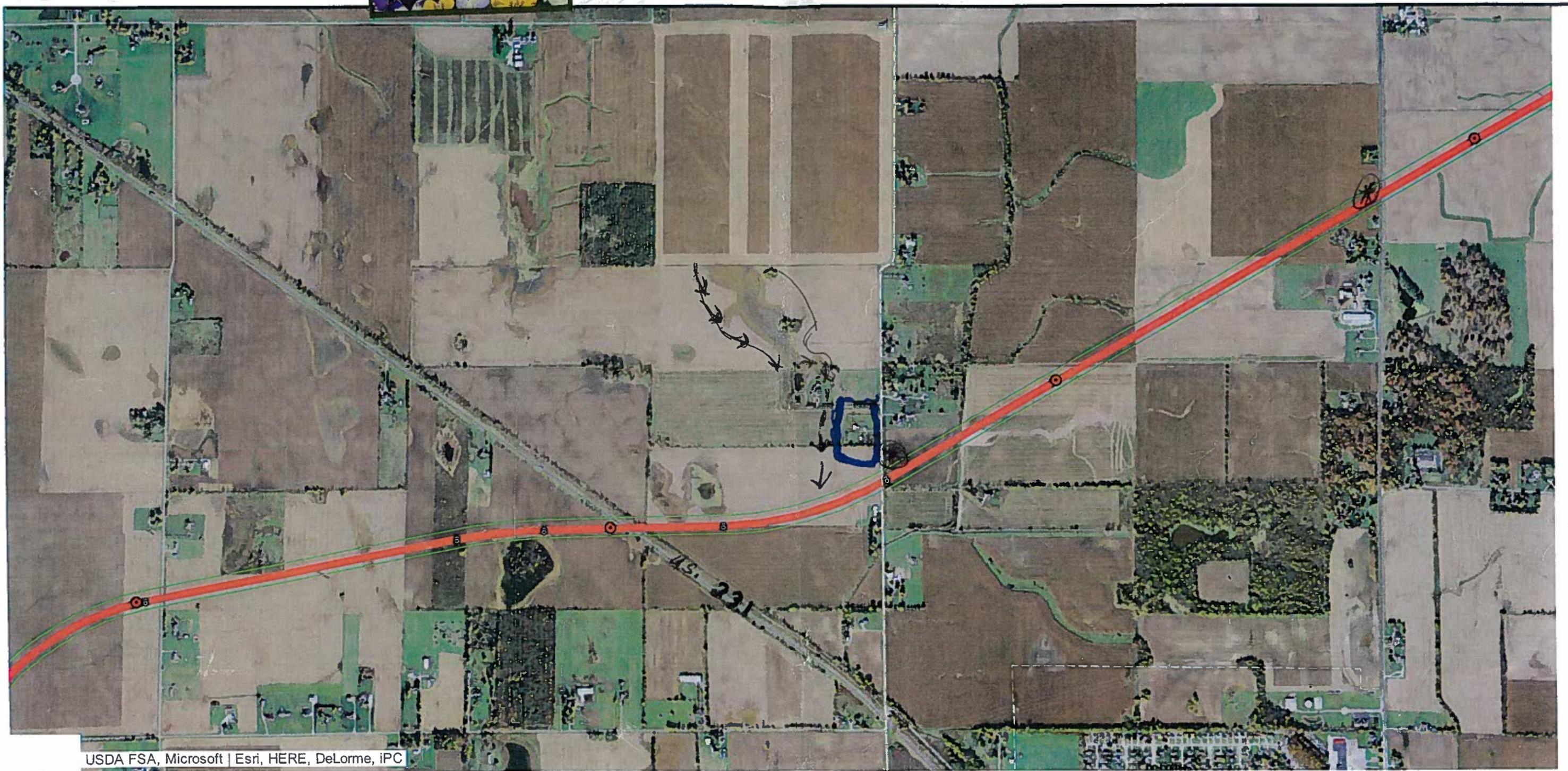
south Lake County. The U.S. Surface Transportation Board, the federal agency overseeing the project, which has to approve the rail line, is hosting public meetings on the project.

The first one will be held from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Aberdeen Manor Ballroom, 216 Ballantree St., Valparaiso. At 5:30 on the same day a meeting will be held at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall, 17401 Morse St., in Lowell. The board also will meet at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday at the American Legion banquet hall, 203 S. Washington St., Waukegan, in LaPorte County, and 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the Civic Auditorium banquet room, 1001 Ridge St., LaPorte.

Those unable to attend a public meeting in person can register for an online board meeting from 1 to 3:30 p.m. April 27 at http://www.greatlakesbasinraileds.com/public_involve.html.

■ **On nw1.com:** View more photos of the RAILED meeting at www.nwi.com.

Jan Austgen
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USDA FSA, Microsoft | Esri, HERE, DeLorme, iPC

Austgen property 15080 County Line Rd. (RR less than 500 ft.)! ^{C.L.} noise Pollution destroys farming fields
 * County Line & Route 2 RR divide farmer's fields the water's distance
 → → surface water route from rain. Fills ponds, fills front pasture, and driving through my woods behind house to next field south
 → → tracks will dam the water! Flood land from river to lake!
 If train wreck, hazardous material could get into soil, groundwater and contaminate wells, soil, and Kankakee River.