

May 11, 2016

Mr. Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 35952
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Mr. Dave Navecky,

I am not a farmer, but I live in Rock County, Wisconsin and benefit from the products produced by farmers each day when sitting down at my table. I am concerned about the proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line. This railroad would reduce our farmable land in Rock County by over 580 acres. This is some of the richest farmland in the world. It was created by a tall grass prairie over 1,000 years and cannot be replaced. Besides the main tracks, 1 siding and 2 staging tracks are planned between County MM and M. How many additional acres will be lost for these extra tracks?

The railroad will be transporting crude oil, ethanol, and various toxic chemicals. New tracks are less prone to accidents, but human error spilled more than 20,000 gallons of ethanol into the Mississippi River near Alma, Wis. on Nov. 7, 2015. That train was only traveling 26 mph. How many more acres of prime farmland will be contaminated for years to come by toxic spills from trains going 70 mph?

Besides the land directly under the rail tracks, the railroad will divide farmland into smaller parcels. The large farming equipment used today will be useless in farming small parcels of land cut off from larger fields. More acres will be lost to production. Farmers crossing the tracks with large, slow moving equipment will be in great danger from the trains traveling at 70 miles per hour down the tracks. GLBR anticipates running 110 trains per day. This is one, mile-long train every 15 minutes!

Many farmers in our area have installed extensive drain tile in the fields that enable the rich farmland to be even more productive. The building of rail lines will destroy these drain tiles. Drain tile lines will need to be rerouted in order to maintain proper drainage. Who will pay for this? Not the railroad. The farmers will be forced to incur additional costs to produce less food for American tables.

GLBR's web site states that their purpose "is to construct and operate a safe, reliable, and entirely new freight rail bypass around Chicago..." Routing the tracks through the prime farmland of eastern Rock County does not resolve the rail traffic problem in Chicago. There are miles of under-utilized track already traversing Rock County. There is no reason GLBR cannot forge an alliance with another railroad carrier to upgrade one of these existing lines to accommodate additional rail traffic. Or they could join existing tracks running north to Milwaukee.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration.

Sincerely,

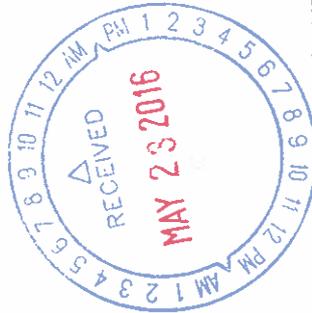


Rosemary Kautz

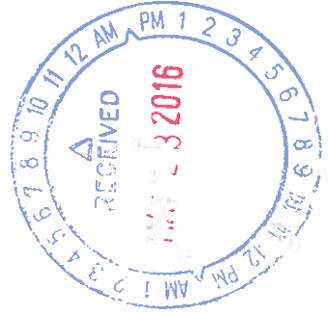


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