

# Illinois Beef Association

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*Representing Cattlemen. Driving Beef Demand.*

May 17, 2016

Surface Transportation Board  
Attn.: Dave Navecky  
395 E Street SW  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

## **Docket No. FD 35952**

The Illinois Beef Association (IBA) welcomes this opportunity to comment on Docket No. FD 35952 and the proposed construction of a 278 mile rail line by Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. (GLBT) from La Porte, Indiana through Illinois to Milton, Wisconsin. The project would allow for up to 110 trains per day and include a 200 foot right of way as the track moves through Kankakee, Grundy, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Winnebago, and Boone Counties in Illinois.

While IBA recognizes that GLBT proposal is in its early stages, our obligation to advocate on issues of concern to our members led the IBA Board of Governors to discuss this issue during its most recent meeting held April 22, 2016. IBA leaders also brought this issue to Washington, DC April 12-14 in conversations with Congresswoman Cheri Bustos, Congressman Adam Kinzinger, and staff from the office of Congresswoman Robin Kelly. During each of these discussions on the issue, the property rights of IBA members whose farms are located within the proposed path of the GLBT rail line were of chief concern.

Of the sixteen impact categories that will be analyzed by the Surface Transportation Board's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), those of highest priority to the IBA Board of Governors are Transportation Systems, Safety, Land Use, Geology & Soils, Noise & Vibration, and Cumulative Impacts. Each of these categories is of concern to farmers in the rail line's path; these are current residents of the impacted counties whose farms and lives will be forever changed should the proposed GLBT rail line be constructed. In addition to those priority impact categories, great concern exists on the part of our members and the IBA Board of Governors should GLBT attempt to take property through eminent domain or should GLBT attempt to add pipelines and utility lines to the proposed right of way within the GLBT rail line. It is the opinion of IBA that GLBT has no legal authority to take property through eminent domain nor does GLBT have the legal right to add energy pipelines inside an accompanying right of way.

In addition to the illegitimacy of GLBT's claims relating to eminent domain and transmission lines, IBA also believes GLBT's claim for needing 15,000 acres in Kankakee for a rail port is grossly overstated. As well, no rail user or government entity has called for this project or in fact signed on to use the proposed 278 mile rail line. Instead those collective groups, which include all six of the major railroads which pass through Chicago, began a comprehensive plan for addressing rail congestion in Chicago in 2013. This plan, Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE), should be looked to first for solutions rather than GLBT's proposed rail line which does not at all address either intercity passenger or commuter rail.

Before the EIS is completed, IBA reasonably requests on behalf of its members that the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) and GLBT fully explore and mitigate the concerns brought by the association. Until these concerns can be appropriately addressed, IBA cannot support the construction and operation of the GLBT rail line. In fact, IBA believes that if a full study of the merits of this proposal is completed the Surface Transportation Board will be compelled to deny GLBT's petition or application.

Sincerely,



Mike Martz  
Illinois Beef Association President  
DeKalb, IL

Cc: Senator Dick Durbin  
Senator Mark Kirk  
Congresswoman Cheri Bustos  
Congressman Adam Kinzinger  
Congresswoman Robin Kelly