



May 19, 2017

Ms. Cynthia Brown
Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Docket No.: FD 35952

Dear Ms. Brown:

I write to express my continued opposition to the Great Lakes Basin Rail Line (GLBRL) and my concerns with both Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc.'s (GLBT) application and their request for a protective order.

Based on GLBT's recent application, I have serious concerns over intent, potential investors and stockholders, and transparency. The proposed route is a massive project that deserves a complete application, diligent oversight, and full transparency for the sake of all the people and lives affected. We have not seen this needed transparency or diligence from GLBT.

GLBT initially justified their need for an application deadline extension in order to, they claimed, collect letters of intent from freight rail carriers confirming use of this purposed rail line. GLBT did not include any such letters in their recent application, citing concerns over competition. Instead, GLBT submitted an incomplete application and relies on mere claims of "holding discussions with potential customers" as adequate proof the rail line will be utilized. This lack of complete and sufficient documentation raises serious concerns over GLBT's intent and diligence. This application should be rejected as incomplete.

GLBT has also submitted a motion for a protective order to keep the identities of stockholders secret. GLBT argues a need for privacy, but I disagree and I ask that you deny the motion for protective order. This project is to be funded entirely through private sources, yet GLBT admits they have "not yet obtained financing commitments for this entire amount and does not anticipate doing so until it receives STB authority to construct the proposed line." Approving a project of this scale, that affects as many lives as this project does without finalized funding is reckless. Additionally, GLBT claims that none of its stockholders are "affiliated in any way with any industry that may be served by the proposed rail line." Without knowing the identities of these stockholders, it is impossible to know if this claim is true.

Despite receiving an extension of the application deadline, GLBT has been unable to produce the documentation and financing information necessary to prove this project is sustainable or even

45TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

realistic. GLBT has also failed to correct several problems I have pointed out in previous letters, including the infeasibility of its route, which cuts directly through the site of a nearly \$1 billion power plant project currently under construction by Alliant Energy.

Finally, please consider the dramatic change in the project cost stated in the application as further evidence of the lack of transparency and infeasibility of the project. The original proposal estimated a cost of \$8 billion to build a freight rail line. However, the latest application proposes a \$2.8 billion rail line. Mr. Frank Patton has simultaneously claimed in the media that the project also includes a privately funded tollway. I would also note that Mr. Patton apparently kept this information from the public intentionally, stating "[w]e didn't want to go public with the highway but that was our original intent." (*See attached article*). This should be more than enough evidence to lead the Surface Transportation Board to be skeptical of the project and reject the application as well as the protective order requesting further secrecy.

An application for a project of this size and scale must be complete, open, and transparent. The residents of southern Wisconsin expect nothing less, and neither should the Surface Transportation Board.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to finding a solution that best serves the interests of my constituents and the residents of southern Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Spreitzer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

State Rep. Mark Spreitzer
45th Wisconsin Assembly District

Encl.

Founder of GLBT freight line adds new toll road to plan



Frank Patton, founder and managing partner of Great Lakes Basin Transportation at the Metra Station on Grand and Cicero avenues Monday, March 21, 2016. (Michael Tercha / Chicago Tribune)

By **Amy Lavalley**
Post-Tribune

MAY 1, 2017, 10:05 PM

Frank Patton's plans for a tri-state freight line now include a privately funded toll road.

Patton, the founder and managing partner of Great Lakes Basin Transportation, is proposing a privately funded toll road, the **Daniel Burnham** Expressway, which would start in Grundy County in Illinois and follow much of the route of the freight train line, ending in Michigan City and following, at least in Lake County, the route of the longstalled Illiana toll road.

"We didn't want to go public with the highway but that was our original intent," Patton said Monday after he released a map that included both transportation plans.

Support Quality Journalism
Subscribe for only 99¢

START NOW >

The application appeared on the federal agency's website for the project late Monday afternoon.

The proposed freight line would cut through southern Lake and Porter counties and has generated a wide swath of opposition in Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana from residents along the route concerned about loss of farmland, safety and drainage woes, among other concerns.

Opponents of the freight line were taken aback to learn Patton also plans a toll road to follow a similar route.

"Each plot twist we hear from Mr. Patton is more absurd than the last," said Porter County Commissioner Laura Blaney, D-South, whose Porter Township property would be bisected by the train line.

Linda Cosgrove, who lives in Eagle Creek Township outside of Lowell, said opposition groups would have to band together. She is a member of Lake County Residents Against Invasion of Land by Eminent Domain, or RAILED, and Blaney is a member of RAILED's Porter County group.

"My first thought is, there's an Illiana group fighting, a railroad group fighting, and we're all going to have to be prepared," Cosgrove said.

Patton said last year his proposed freight train line, to serve Class 1 railroads and provide a bypass around Chicago's congested rail yards, was originally planned to run in tandem with the Illiana but he separated those plans after the route for that toll road changed.

"A lot of people know about the highway," he said, adding it wasn't included in previous map submissions to the Surface Transportation Board because that body is reviewing the plans for the freight train line, while state transportation departments in Illinois and Indiana will review the toll road plans.

"The railroad certainly is not depending on the highway at all," he said. "In our opinion, the railroad is going to get approved and go forward."

While Patton has said the rail line would be \$8 billion, he said on Monday that figure is actually for both the rail line and the toll road, which together would form the "Daniel Burnham Transportation Corridor."

While the toll road would not follow the rail line exactly, the two routes together would form a 2,000-foot-wide corridor. The toll road would be 125 miles, with 18 intersections with major highways, though that could change, he said. Patton said the toll road as depicted on the map was "more for conceptual purposes."

The cost projected in the application for the railroad, without any contingencies, is about \$3 billion, and the toll road is about \$4 billion, with \$1 billion in contingencies, he said.

"I think the combination of the highway and the railroad would be an economic powerhouse that could

Support Quality Journalism
Subscribe for only 99¢

START NOW >

He expects the toll road proposal to go through a review process by the Illinois and Indiana state transportation departments that would include public hearings, and will have a more specific map in the next two to three months.

"Those are details we are currently working out," he said.

Will Wingfield, who handles media relations for the Indiana Department of Transportation, referred questions about the proposed privately funded toll road to other agencies, but said INDOT was aware of the freight line proposal.

"INDOT always wants to maintain an open dialogue about transportation improvements that have potential for regional economic significance," he said via email.

Amy Lavalley is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

Copyright © 2017, Post-Tribune

This article is related to: [Daniel Burnham](#)

Support Quality Journalism
Subscribe for only 99¢

START NOW ›