

Commentary

Early in the process of determining a route that would meet the intended purpose and operating requirements of GLBT, investigations of potential routes closer to Chicago and farther away from Chicago were considered. The general pros and cons of these concepts were evaluated before deciding to invest time and money into conceptual engineering for what became GLBT’s Preferred Alternative. A summary of those considerations is presented here in further response to Question 1 in Information Request No. 1.

	Pros	Cons
Closer-In	Closer proximity to the Chicago market	Greater population density and proximity, greater potential exposure of population to construction disruption, noise, vibration, etc.
	Shorter construction path	More costly real estate, more homes, businesses, etc. to be bought out and/or relocated
	Shorter connection paths, potentially shorter train run times	Larger number and greater cost of grade separations, greater potential for road and street traffic disruption
	Less farmland disruption	More residential, industrial and commercial disruption, development accommodation and mitigation resulting in sharper curves and slower train speeds counter to purpose of project
	Future development	More likely to become land-locked and prevented from cost-effective expansion to accommodate future growth
Further-Out	Potentially less population density (not the case in Wisconsin, and highly dependent on specific routing in any of the 3 states)	Longer route, more river crossings, more real estate must be acquired, more costly track structures must be constructed, greater total construction, material, and operations costs
	Less costly real estate	More farmland disruption
	Potential rail connection benefits, i.e. gets trains off originating carrier sooner	Increased likelihood of disrupting environmentally sensitive areas
	Higher rates or through freight divisions required to support additional costs	Long-haul railroads potentially discouraged by prospect of significantly short hauling themselves (reduced revenue)
	Plenty of space for capacity expansion if needed	More costly to maintain, upgrade and expand due to greater length

After considering these factors in light of the project's purpose and technical design requirements, GLBT applied its financial resources to routing options that struck an economically viable balance between the positives and negatives of closer-in and further-out corridors.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the Preferred Alternative has been designed to avoid population centers and environmentally sensitive areas to the maximum extent possible, especially when compared with the urban disruptions associated with many of the other potential alternative alignments (including many of the alternatives proposed in public comments). The Preferred Alternative would minimize the number of homes and business affected by the Project, minimize the disruption to farm fields, satisfy the railroad's purpose and operating requirements, and resolve topographic challenges resulting in the defined route and specific routing options.