

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-16

A Resolution Expressing Opposition to the Proposed Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. Rail Project Located Near the City of Milton.

WHEREAS, Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. has proposed to construct a new rail project in the eastern section of Rock County, commencing east of the City of Milton heading south and east until it reaches the most south eastern corner of Rock County dissecting some of Rock County's most pristine farmland; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. has stated that their intent is to purchase a two hundred (200) foot wide corridor over the project route, approximately twenty four (24) miles in Rock County, which is estimated to remove over five hundred and seventy (570) acres of prime farmland from production in Rock County; and

WHEREAS, the County of Rock PACE Program has allocated financial resources for the implementation and continuation of farmland preservation activities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Milton supports the aforementioned activities associated with the preservation of the County's most pristine farmland and understands that agriculture is a vital component to our local economy; and

WHEREAS, the University of Wisconsin Extension Service estimates the loss of agricultural production at nearly six hundred eight thousand and six hundred and fifteen dollars (\$608,615) annually (2016 dollars); and,

WHEREAS, the mapped route of the rail line may also impact the established subsurface drainage network that keeps thousands of acres of farmland productive, resulting in untold number of subsurface tile drainage systems needing to be updated; and,

WHEREAS, numerous additional negative impacts should be considered, including but not limited to the fragmentation of woodlots, impacts to wetlands, impacts to wildlife habitat resources, and impacts to surface and groundwater resources of the county; and,

WHEREAS, Rock County has been a member of the Wisconsin River Trail Transit Commission (WRRTC) since 1982 with nine other counties in Southern Wisconsin and the WRRTC is the owner and is responsible for, safe and reliable local rail service of the existing infrastructure that the proposed rail line will connect with; and,

WHEREAS, Rock County, along with nine other counties have invested over five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) each for capital improvements for the safe and efficient local rail service; and,

WHEREAS, the WRRTC and Wisconsin Department of Transportation is under a lease agreement with the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad for use and maintenance of all WRRTC infrastructure; and,

WHEREAS, the WRRTC has expressed concern regarding the costs associated with the needed rail improvements with the proposed increased rail traffic which will force the commission to upgrade current rail facilities from Class I to Class II systems with an estimate cost of nine hundred thousand dollars

(\$900,000.00) per mile of rail with a total cost estimated to exceed thirty-six million dollars (\$36,000,000.00) county wide; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Milton is concerned about the lack of specificity related to the impacts in our local community to traffic, safety, and required improvements necessary to accommodate the connection approximately one-half mile east of the City of Milton; and,

WHEREAS, the lack of specificity of the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc.'s plans makes it nearly impossible for the City of Milton to evaluate the project objectively in respects to any positive economic development that may occur as a result of the proposed rail line.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Milton Common Council goes on record in opposition to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc., rail project in its presently planned location and limited detail due to its known and unknown negative impacts on the agricultural sectors of Rock County, it's untold impacts to natural resources and its safety and financial implications to upgrade the existing rail infrastructure within and near the City of Milton.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk forward this Resolution to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, Secretary of Department of Natural Resources, Cathy Stepp; Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, Ben Brancel; Wisconsin State Senator Janis Ringhand; Wisconsin State Representative Andy Jorgenson; U.S. Senator Ron Johnson, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, U.S. Representative Mark Pocan, U.S. Representative Paul Ryan, and Dave Navecky, Office of Environmental Analysis, Surface Transportation Board.

Adopted by the Common Council of the City of Milton this 7th day of June, 2016.

By:

Anissa M. Welch, Mayor of the City of Milton

Attest:

Elena Hilby, City Clerk / Deputy Treasurer