

Rebuttal Statement Regarding the Proposed Texas Materials Rail Line

- **Submitted to the Surface Transportation Board (STB)**
March 15, 2025

As homeowners and property owners living near the proposed Texas Materials rail line, our family strongly opposes this project due to the significant negative impacts it will have on our community, environment, and quality of life. While we understand the need for efficient transportation, this rail line places an undue burden on local residents without offering any clear benefits. The long-term consequences to property values, safety, and the environment far outweigh any potential advantages. We urge the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to reject this proposal in full.

1. Impact on Property and Homeowners' Rights

The introduction of an industrial freight rail line through established residential and rural areas raises serious concerns about property values, safety, and long-term livability.

- **Property Devaluation:** Homes near active rail lines often see a decline in value due to increased noise, traffic, and industrial activity. Many homeowners, myself included, invested in this area for its peaceful rural character—something this project would permanently disrupt.
- **Potential Land Use Conflicts:** If additional land is needed beyond the existing right-of-way, property owners face uncertainty about potential forced agreements or property loss.
- **Safety and Access Issues:** Train crossings will create delays for residents, emergency services, and school transportation. Increased rail activity also poses risks, especially in areas where children and pets live and play.

2. Environmental and Wildlife Concerns

The land between Burnet and Lampasas is home to diverse wildlife and natural habitats that would be disrupted by this rail line.

- **Habitat Destruction:** Local wildlife, including deer, birds, and other native species, rely on the open land that would be impacted. Noise, vibration, and physical barriers from trains can permanently alter movement and nesting patterns.
- **Water and Air Quality Risks:** Construction and train traffic could introduce dust, runoff, and pollutants that affect both human and environmental health.
- **Noise and Light Pollution:** Residents who have enjoyed a quiet, rural lifestyle will suddenly be subjected to the constant sound of freight trains, horns, and industrial operations, including during nighttime hours.

3. This Project is Unnecessary and Harmful

This rail line is not a necessity but a disruption. The original rail corridor was removed long ago for a reason, and reviving it disregards the community's evolution.

- **The Rail Line Serves Private Interests, Not the Community:** The project is designed for Texas Materials' convenience, with no direct benefit to residents.
- **Alternative Solutions Exist:** Texas Materials has other options for transporting materials that do not place an unfair burden on homeowners and the environment.
- **The Harm Cannot Be Undone:** Property devaluation, environmental damage, and quality-of-life disruptions will be permanent, while the claimed benefits remain speculative.

4. Need for Transparency and Community Input

This project is being considered despite overwhelming concerns from the residents who will be most affected. Given its significant impact, homeowners and landowners deserve a greater voice in the decision-making process.

- **Public Hearings in Affected Communities:** Residents in Burnet and Lampasas should have the opportunity to voice their concerns in formal public meetings before any decisions are made.
- **Comprehensive Environmental and Impact Studies:** An independent review should assess the long-term effects on property values, safety, and the environment, with full transparency of the findings.
- **Accountability and Oversight:** If Texas Materials insists on pursuing this project, they must provide clear commitments regarding noise control, pollution mitigation, and infrastructure maintenance to ensure that community concerns are not ignored.

While transparency is crucial, no amount of oversight or mitigation will erase the fact that this rail line is unnecessary and harmful to the community.

Conclusion

This rail line would introduce significant disruptions to the lives of homeowners while providing little to no direct benefit to the community. It threatens property values, disrupts the environment, and serves private industry at the expense of residents. The long-term consequences to safety, livability, and the natural landscape far outweigh any potential advantages. We urge the Surface Transportation Board to carefully consider the concerns of those who live in the area and reject this proposal outright, as the cost to homeowners, the environment, and surrounding communities is far too great.

Respectfully submitted,

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