

GER DEIS Online Public Meeting

Thursday, May 1, 2025 • 6:00 PM CT • 1h 59m 48s

00:30

Good evening, thank you for joining us. We're going to get started in a few minutes. We're just going to give people some time to filter in, just letting you know you're in the right place. I'm going to share the first slide and we'll get started in just a moment, thank you.

01:24

Once again, thank you for joining. We will get started in just a moment once we give some more time for some people to join, thank you.

02:43

All right, I have 7:03 PM. We will give it 30 more seconds and then we'll begin.

03:12

Okay, I think we can begin. Good evening, my name is Alan Belniak, providing some assistance for the meeting. We'll go over a few administrative items and then we'll get into the content portion of the meeting.

03:31

Those of you who wish to hear the meeting in Spanish may need to press the interpretation button down below. If you don't see that and you see a more button with three dots, click that to expose the interpretation button. It gives you an option of languages, select Spanish, and then either okay or confirm, and you will hear our interpretation live in the Spanish channel. For closed captioning, please look for the CC button down below and you can display live English closed captions generated by a computer on the screen.

04:16

During the comment session at the end of the presentation, you may raise your hand if you would like to speak. Each speaker will be given up to three minutes for their comments. Note this is a comment only session, it is not questions and answers. And as you may have heard when you joined, this meeting is being recorded. I have placed a translation of these meeting logistics into the chat of the meeting. Note that chat inbound is not permitted. Use this to message outbound messages. And I will go over this again after the presentation is over and we get into the comment section. So, with that, I'd like to hand the meeting over to Andrea.

05:09

Andrea, yes, thank you. Welcome to the Green Eagle Railroad Project Environmental Impact Statement Public Comment Period. This is our third public meeting. This is our only online meeting. We held two in-person meetings in Eagle Pass on Tuesday, one Tuesday afternoon and one Tuesday evening. So, for those that are here, thank you so much for coming. As I said, my name is Andrea Poole. I am an environmental protection specialist with the Surface Transportation Board and my contracting group and I have completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Green Eagle Railroad project and that came out in March of this year. And we are here to get your comments on both the Draft EIS, the mitigation measures, and the alternatives that we've presented. We look forward to hearing some comments from you guys tonight.

06:25

Next slide, please. So, I wanted to kind of provide a little bit of where we were last year and today, give you an overview of the Draft, and then open it up for comments. So, before we open it up for comments, let's go ahead and let you know that in April of last year, we came down to scope out the Environmental Impact Statement. We came down to Eagle Pass and did two listening and open house sessions there and then did an online session back in April of 2024. And what we tried to do there is gather your concerns for the project as we knew it and as it had been developed thus far, so we could understand what we needed to study for you to answer any questions you thought you might have about the project. And we've done that in the form of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that has been out for about a month now. So, we came in April to do scoping. In July, we released the Final Scope of Study for the EIS and we worked from July until March of this year, 2025, to draft that EIS, and we published it last month, like I said. So, we have a 45-day comment period for this Draft EIS before we finalize it and respond to any potential comments and the comment period ends in just a few more days on May 5th. If you'll give me the next slide, please. Great.

08:10

If you came to the scoping meetings, you've certainly seen this slide before. The last time I was here was at the scoping process, which is the second blue line there. And now we're at the Draft EIS and in quarter two of 2025, so we're right on schedule. I think so. After this, we'll prepare the Final EIS, and then the Surface Transportation Board, which is an independent agency and run by politically appointed Board members, will consider these environmental issues as well as transportation merits in deciding a Board decision on whether to authorize the construction and operation of this rail line in cohorts with the Puerto Verde International Trade Bridge project. So, next slide please. So, here are some of the things that we heard from you and from federal and state resource agencies that we needed to cover in this EIS. So, you can read that list below. The mitigation section is based on the impacts that our analytical studies showed us and so we'll be looking for comments on those mitigations as well. If you guys see anything else that needs to be done or you think something can be improved, we'd certainly be happy to hear those comments as well tonight. Let me have the next slide.

09:42

So here is a map that's in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of the Proposed Action. This certainly has changed since scoping a little. The facility, the Commercial Vehicle Truck facility, which is in gray, with the new road bridge and the central targeting tower and the canines and services and the service road and some of those things have moved over to the west a little.

10:13

The applicant has proposed the northern, what we are calling the New Rail Bridge Northern Rail Alternative, with the non-intrusive...I'm losing words, sorry, folks, it's a non-intrusive screening for rail. And then because of potential impacts, visual impacts to communities, we have also analyzed fully the Northern rail bridge section. So, the Southern rail is the proposed rail from the applicant, my apologies, and the northern rail is the one that we've come up with based on what we perceived would be potential impacts to the community. Next slide please.

11:13

This shows the rail alternatives, side by side. You can see that they are similar from the UP mainline at milepost 31 around to Barrera Street and that's where the Northern and the Southern lines diverge a little. You'll see that the Northern Rail crosses Seco Creek a couple of times, whereas the Southern Rail Alternative does not. Other than that, the survey areas, the right-of-way, width, noise barriers, and all that will be fairly equal.

12:00

All right. So, with that, I'd like to open up a comment session to the crowd. Again, I am here just to listen to you and hear your thoughts on the work that we've been doing and presented in March in our Draft EIS, thank you so much.

12:28

Good evening, once again, this is Alan. I'd like to just to go over once more the logistics for the meeting. If you need to access the interpretation, you can do so by pressing the button down below, looks like a globe. If you can't see that, please click the More button, looks like three dots, to expose the interpretation button and select Spanish. You can also see a live transcript in English by pressing the transcript button.

12:58

We are about to start this commenting period. And just as a reminder, this is a commenting session, not a question-and-answer session. You will be given up to three minutes to share your comments. And just please remember this is being live interpreted. So, please do your best, excuse me, to speak slowly and clearly. So, with that, if anyone would like to speak, please press the raise hand button down below. It'll send a command to me to let me know that you'd like to speak and I will take you off mute and you can share your comments.

13:44

Okay, I am confirming at the moment, I do not see any raised hands. However, we will remain here for the duration of the allotted time for the meeting. So, if anyone would like to change their mind later on and speak, they are more than welcome to. If you hear periods of silence, it's just us waiting for someone to raise their hand. Every so often I will chime in to let you know the audio is still working, but please raise your hand at any time if you'd like to share a comment.

14:46

All right, I do see a raised hand in the audience and that is Shelley Brown. Shelley, you should see now see a command to unmute your mic and when you do, please just introduce yourself and you have three minutes.

15:00

Hi Alan, hi Andrea, can you hear me? Okay? Hi, thank you so much for having this online meeting. I have a, well, you say no questions, only comments. My question is when will you be able to answer a question that I have?

15:33

Shelly, if you write your questions down and submit them to us or let us know here, we are responding to comments.

15:42

Oh, okay, great.

15:46

And we will be responding to them in a comment response in the Final EIS.

15:53

Oh, okay, I understand. Thank you. Andrea.

15:56

Sure.

15:58

Okay. Thank you Shelly very much. Okay, thank you Shelly for breaking the ice. I do not see any more hands raised at the moment. As I said before, we will be here for any other person who would like to speak.

22:14

Just a reminder, if you would like to speak and share a comment, you may do so by raising your hand. That will send a command to me to let me know you'd like to speak. I will then take you off mute and you'll have three minutes.

27:29

Good evening, once again. If you would like to offer a comment, please raise your hand. That will send a command to me to let me know you'd like to do so. I will come on about every 10 minutes or so to remind us all. Once more, we are here until 8 PM Central, thank you very much.

29:08

Okay. Normally, we don't let people speak before other people have spoken, but there's not a rush on speaking folks at the moment. So, Shelley, you now have the option to speak once more and with that, you have three minutes.

29:27

Thank you. Hey, Andrea, again, I don't know if you can answer this, because everything seems just very vague. But a master plan? Is there a master plan or is that going to be shared with us at some point?

30:01

Okay, Shelly, thank you for the comment and yes, understood about the master plan. Like Andrea said earlier, you can submit a question in writing or a formal response in the final document, so, thanks very much.

30:19

Wait, repeat that one more time Alan, please. I didn't quite get that.

30:22

Sure, I think, per what Andrea said earlier, there's an opportunity to submit questions and they will be part of a formal response to questions, response to comments.

30:36

And where is that? Do I just put it in the chat you said?

30:40

No, I do believe you have to mail that in formally. I don't think the chat works here for official comments for the record.

30:52

So, how can I find that?

30:57

I would like to say that all comments that come in, even in question form, will be recorded in this transcript and we, the Surface Transportation Board, will be replying to substantive comments in the Final EIS.

31:18

Pardon me, I misspoke. Thank you Andrea for clearing that up and thank you Shelly for the comment.

31:25

And so, just to confirm, Alan and Andrea, go to the website and find the mailing address and submit my question there or am I not understanding? I'm just trying to confirm.

31:52

Shelly, I have your comment on this transcript of this meeting.

32:04

Okay, thanks very much.

38:26

Once again, just a friendly reminder, if you would like to offer up a comment, please raise your hand and that will let us know you'd like to speak. If you are dialing in from a telephone that command is star nine and we will take you off of mute, give you three minutes to share your comments, and I will be saying this just about every 10 minutes or so to let you know we are here. We are with you until 8pm Central time, thanks very much.

43:48

Good evening for anyone joining or rejoining us, we are in the comment period of the meeting. If you'd like to share a comment, you can raise your hand and that will send a command to me to let me know that you would like to speak. A raise hand button is found below in the bottom tray of zoom controls and once you come off mute, you'll have three minutes to share your comments.

1:00:18

Good evening to those who have just joined us, we are in the comment period. Please raise your hand if you'd like to share a comment and we will take you off mute, thank you.

1:58:47

All right, we are about at the end of the meeting. This is one final call for comments and scanning the room, I do not see any. So, with that, back over to you Andrea to close us out.

1:59:12

Thank you so much everyone for attending tonight and if we didn't hear from you this evening and you would still like your comments to be recorded, please send us electronic comments at stb.gov or mail comments using the information that's on our viewing right now or if you can't see that, please go to our website, [greeneagle railroad EIS](http://greeneagle.railroad.eis), and you can find all the information there. Thanks so much and have a good evening, goodbye.