

GREEN EAGLE RAILROAD PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC COMMENT MEETING
DOCKET NO. FD 36652

EAGLE PASS INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR TRADE
3295 Bob Rogers Drive
Eagle Pass, Texas 78852

APRIL 29TH, 2025
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD REPRESENTATIVES:

Ms. Andrea Poole

Ms. Rachel McNamara

Mr. Laurent Cartayrade

ALSO PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING:

Ms. Maria Torres

Mr. Alfredo Sanchez

Mr. George Baxter

Ms. Alicia Gonzalez

Mr. David Kraus

Mr. Jesus Fuentes

Ms. Juanita Martinez

Ms. Enriqueta Diaz

Mr. Rolando Salinas

Mr. Lynn Balderas

Mr. Javier Riojas

Ms. Amerika Grawal

Mr. Enrique Lopetegui, Interpreter

Ms. Teresa Faz, Interpreter

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1 On the 29th day of April 2025, between the hours of
2 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., the above entitled meeting
3 came on for discussion, and the following proceedings
4 were held:

5 MS. POOLE: I'm with the Surface
6 Transportation Board. We're here this morning for the
7 Green Eagle Railroad Project. We have completed a Draft
8 Environment Impact Analysis and today we are taking
9 public comments at two meetings here on-site today. And
10 then later in the week, we'll have one more opportunity
11 with an online meeting for people that couldn't get away
12 from their jobs or whatever so that we can ensure we
13 hear everybody's comments.

14 But I work for the Office of Environmental
15 Analysis, OEA, and as part of the Transportation Board,
16 our job is to do the environmental review of
17 construction and operation projects that come before the
18 board. The board has jurisdiction over certain
19 transportation matters. In this case, the Board has the
20 authority over the construction and operation of new
21 rail lines in the United States.

22 So in December of '23, Green Eagle Railroad
23 petitioned the Board for authority to construct a new
24 rail line about 1.3 miles from the border to the UP line
25 here in Eagle Pass in Maverick County. The process

1 through which the board reviews those requests is
2 twofold: We have a transportation-merit side that
3 reviews in economic and stuff against the policies of
4 the United States, and then separately, we have the
5 environmental side. The environmental side is what I
6 do, and part of that process is the drafting and
7 establishment of the Impact Statement. We put it out
8 about a month ago and we're here to get your comments on
9 it.

10 So there's the agenda; Last Year and Today,
11 Draft EIS and Proposed Action, and then the Comment
12 Session, which is certainly the most important part of
13 our meeting today. Some of you guys might recognize
14 yourselves. I see you certainly in some of those
15 pictures, but those are pictures we took last year when
16 we were here for Scoping. It was about a year and three
17 weeks ago that we were here getting comments from you
18 guys on what we should study; what resources,
19 environmental and socioeconomic, were important to you.

20 We came and got your comments in three
21 meetings, two on-site and one online, and then we wrote
22 and analyzed those resources against federal and state
23 requirements and laws. Then we developed and published
24 last month the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
25 That report has been out about a month, and I hope

1 everybody's had a chance to read it. It is in print at
2 the local library. It is available for download from
3 the Board and from our specific project site. We sent
4 out over 700 postcards to people in the community to let
5 them know where to get that and download it. I would
6 like to say that the final scope of study that we
7 published last year has changed somewhat in the Draft
8 EIS because of the new administration and executive
9 orders related to some of those reviews.

10 So today, you guys have seen this before if
11 you were here at scoping, this walks you through the
12 process that we go through to do an environmental
13 evaluation for new construction projects. At the first
14 yellow dot on the right-hand side was Scoping, when we
15 came here to get your thoughts on what we should review.
16 Today, with the red star, we're gathering comments on
17 the review that we've completed for you guys. All
18 right.

19 So hopefully this isn't the first time
20 you're seeing the cover of my report. My team of
21 scientists did an exceptional job writing a very concise
22 document that wasn't overburdensome to review. We
23 covered grade crosses, safety and delay, roadway
24 capacity, noise, air quality was a lot of importance,
25 energy control resources, biological resources, water

1 resources, land use, and visual quality. A lot of
2 people had comments about hazardous material and waste,
3 and that is covered under the safety components of the
4 project as it deals with road safety and/or railroad
5 safety. Those were one of the comments in there. All
6 right.

7 So here is a map of the proposed action.
8 You see in gray the inspection facilities related to the
9 railway project. You also see two lines on the
10 right-hand side of the page together and they diverge
11 about the middle of the map sheet providing us two
12 alternatives: The northern Railroad route and the
13 southern Railroad route.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ma'am, we can't even
15 read what's on there.

16 MS. POOLE: You may go get a copy of the
17 EIS in the back of the room, if that would be helpful to
18 you to get a map in your lap. But what it shows, if you
19 can see in green, is the staging areas; the nonintrusive
20 inspection facility, bridges, bridge crossings and such
21 are in that map. As you guys are aware, this project is
22 part of the greater Puerto Verde Global Trade Bridge
23 Project, which in addition to the rail line, certainly
24 includes the truck-border crossing. The Board does not
25 regulate the CMV facility or the roadways, but we did

1 review and analyze impacts related to the construction
2 of the entire Puerto Verde Global Trade Bridge Project.
3 Although we only authorized the railway, our document
4 outlines and analyzes the impact of the entire
5 construction and operation of this brand-new facility.

6 It's important that I let you know that in
7 our analysis, the CMV facility would not add new truck
8 or rail traffic, nor does the railway as it's
9 constructed anticipate additional railway traffic. It
10 will just replace the railroad that comes through the
11 center of town. So the project proposed the Southern
12 Railroad Route, and our office added the Northern Route
13 so that we could compare potential impacts and provide
14 to you an overview of one versus another versus a
15 no-build. You'll see that in the EIS as well. All
16 right.

17 So now I'd like to go ahead and begin the
18 Public Comment Session. During that time, you'll see
19 slides in the background that highlight some of the
20 key findings in the Draft EIS. Nothing we're posting up
21 here is new information. It's all information that's
22 been published in the document that's been out for a
23 month. I would like to now go ahead and bring up our
24 moderator and review the ground rules in order to get
25 your comments. Thank you so much.

1 MS. McNAMARA: Good morning. I'm Rachel
2 McNamara. I'm going to be moderating today. So we're
3 here today to take your comments. This won't be a
4 question-and-answer session. We want to leave time for
5 all of the speakers to provide their input on the Draft
6 Environmental Impact Statement. I have a list of those
7 of you who have preregistered or signed up as you came
8 in, and I'll be calling those speakers first, and then
9 time allowing, we'll have additional speakers if you
10 decide later on in the process that you want to provide
11 a comment.

12 Each speaker will have three minutes;
13 that's to allow as many people as possible to provide
14 their comments in the time that we have allotted. If
15 you start getting close to your three minutes, I'll let
16 you know, but there will be a timer on the screen as
17 well that can help you guide your comment length. I ask
18 that, when you come forward, that you state and spell
19 your name first for the benefit of our court reporter.
20 The meeting is being transcribed and it's also being
21 recorded.

22 During your comments, please refrain from
23 profanity and maintain civility when you provide your
24 comments. And just a reminder again: We are not going
25 to be taking questions. We want to maximize your time

1 for comments.

2 All right. The first three speakers in the
3 order that I have are Maria Torres, Sophia Torres, and
4 Alfredo Sanchez. So Ms. Torres, if you'd like to come
5 up.

6 MS. TORRES: We are Indian First Nation.
7 We exist. This is our land. We're First Nation
8 Indians. Where's Juan Garza or Gustavo? Thank you
9 again, Transportation Surface. I'm just gonna pass you
10 a letter that we sent you way back when we're fighting
11 the coal mine. My mother is in her late 70s. Here's
12 the letter that we sent you in 2012. I'm just appalled
13 with this. I just want to tell you that we pre-existed.
14 I don't know if you understand pre-existed. We were
15 before any settlements here. We're pre-historic people,
16 okay? We're Indian First Nation: Tierra de los
17 Pacuache. My mom is a descendant. We look the way we
18 look because we pre-exist everybody.

19 So you say three minutes, but we have the
20 time with my mom too. We're coming tonight to speak
21 because this is a huge impact. We already have a
22 railway. We want you to deny the GER. I -- I just
23 downloaded it and read it all and it's so wrong. You
24 don't even talk about history.

25 So we pre-existed before the Spanish came

1 here, before the Vatican. Five nations, we deal with
2 them, my ancestors. We (inaudible) founders Vicente,
3 Coahuila. To the banks from the Rio, these sacred
4 waters (inaudible). That's the name of a river. We
5 have the authentic -- I am the authority. I'm the
6 contributor-writer over ten years ago in the United
7 Nations to not only the Alamo Mission, San Antonio de
8 Valero, San Francisco de Solano --

9 MS. McNAMARA: Ms. Torres, can you speak
10 into the microphone, please?

11 MS. TORRES: We just want to say something
12 because this is outrageous. Because, again, we have --
13 yeah, we have -- we pre-existed. We're sovereign. We
14 inherited the nation. We're the true people of Texas.
15 Comanches and Apaches were our enemies. We have been at
16 war since the Spanish came. But not only the Vatican
17 came. Not only the Spanish and king of Spain came here.
18 Not only France came here with the La Salle (phonetic)
19 wreckage. You need to put all our story in the EIS.
20 You didn't put it. That's why it's not -- this is a
21 historical region.

22 This is rubber-stamped. They're so
23 corrupted; rubber-stamp and give you the okay to destroy
24 this we inhabit, innocently inhabit. You had the
25 audacity to come in June and July 2024 and you recovered

1 artifacts under Section 1. Where's Allen here?

2 MS. McNAMARA: Ms. Torres, we'll need you
3 to wrap up.

4 MS. TORRES: And I'll wrap up. You're
5 impacting on my history and my mother and my sister and
6 everybody here Pacuache. Shame on you, you sellouts.
7 And I have a relationship with the Department of
8 Interior. They respect the --

9 MS. POOLE: We can't hear you.

10 MS. TORRES: We're still waiting for the
11 federal recognition. And I need to go and talk to the
12 superintendent of the San Antonio Mission. What's going
13 on? When are they going to give us the federal
14 recognition?

15 MS. McNAMARA: Ms. Torres, we're gonna have
16 to move on.

17 MS. TORRES: (Inaudible) Kickapoos one
18 thousand acres. Finished 41 ND07, you cannot touch it.
19 41ND18 is relevant. It should be in the nation
20 registry. It's relevant. You cannot touch these
21 archeological sites. It's the story of us in Eagle Pass
22 and Maverick County, 41ND203, 41ND277. This is
23 outrageous.

24 MS. McNAMARA: Ms. Torres, we're gonna have
25 to --

1 MS. TORRES: We'll finish and come back
2 tonight. 41ND203, and again --

3 MS. POOLE: Ms. Torres, you've had your
4 turn.

5 MS. TORRES: No. Deny this. Fight for
6 Laredo.

7 (Simultaneous talking.)

8 MS. TORRES: And you need to include all
9 the maps. They didn't include the maps.

10 MS. POOLE: You're giving her your time?
11 That's fine.

12 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Andrea Poole.
13 This is a map by the authorities (inaudible) each here,
14 Francisco Barrega. This is proof from the Department of
15 Interior. Tierra de los Pacuache, next to San Juan
16 Baptista de Solano. That is presently the Alamo. Our
17 people went and agreed in 1700 with the (inaudible).
18 They came and said, let's go and build the missions
19 further, further up the Nueces River (inaudible).
20 That's the name and (inaudible) the Pacuache languages.

21 Our people, we're real people. That's why
22 the San Antonio missions were inscribed, because we're
23 still here and we're waiting for the federal
24 recognition. And I don't want a casino. I don't need
25 that. We need to help our community, okay? We gave too

1 much to the Kickapoos. They can go back to the
2 (inaudible). They have not helped me in anything. I
3 don't need a handout from Juan Garza or Gustavo.

4 And going back, these are the maps that
5 were not included in the EIS. Where are they? These
6 are monumental maps in the United Nations description.
7 We viewed over 60 missions (inaudible). 60 chiefs of
8 our people are buried in the Mission of San Antonio, the
9 sacred ground, and you're telling me that these
10 archeological sites in page EIS of the report, of the
11 Transportation Surface Miner in Washington, D.C. --
12 don't disrespect us, Transportation Surface Mining
13 Board. You're disrespecting us. Deny this permit until
14 you fully comport with us and to all the other agencies
15 and state agencies even the U.S. (inaudible).

16 And not only these sacred sites have
17 relevance, are significant. Because we're still here
18 since pre-historic times. And so, again, we don't want
19 them to put big pillars. One other suggestion that they
20 have to put this rail is unacceptable; put thick walls
21 to insulate the noise. This place, more than, I don't
22 know, 20 families are there. We have the Union Pacific
23 Rail that does the work and we can do it (inaudible)
24 control over the United States federal government. So I
25 forgot, the four nations was United States --

1 MS. McNAMARA: Ms. Sanchez [sic], you have
2 30 seconds.

3 MS. TORRES: -- (inaudible) you did not
4 include. And the one in 1886, that was Mexico. Five
5 nations I already gave you: Spain, France, the Vatican,
6 Mexico, and United States. That's why the Pacuache
7 deals with all these nations, to never forget who or
8 where. This is the original document of 1700 of San
9 Francisco de Solano be transported to San Antonio de
10 Valero that is presently the Alamo.

11 MS. McNAMARA: All right. We're going to
12 have to move onto the next speaker.

13 MS. TORRES: Thank you. We will keep
14 talking. And all these maps are not included. Tonight,
15 I will read you the story of all the nations, Francisco
16 Garcia de (inaudible) --

17 MS. McNAMARA: All right. The next speaker
18 is going to be Alfredo Sanchez and then George Baxter.

19 MS. TORRES: Thank you, guys.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ma'am, you shouldn't
21 be running a slideshow. You should only have a timer.
22 That's bias.

23 MS. McNAMARA: Thank you.

24 MR. SANCHEZ: Oh, all right. Well, first
25 of all, I just want to say, you know --

1 MS. McNAMARA: Would you give your name one
2 more time and spell it for us?

3 MR. SANCHEZ: I'm sorry. My name's Alfredo
4 Sanchez. It's A-L-F-R-E-D-O S-A-N-C-H-E-Z. A Roman
5 poet once said: Beware of the Greeks bearing gifts.
6 You-all come in here claiming you'll bring jobs and
7 you'll bring all this. I just want to state my concerns
8 for your practices, your backroom dealings, the way you
9 bought and paid for our local politicians before
10 consulting the people that live in these areas.

11 You claim you are showing your slides here
12 with your environmental impacts and whatnot. That is
13 just environmental impact. We have people here who
14 lived in these areas, that have grown up here. People
15 go ahead and buy their homes claiming to be their
16 forever homes. These places are for our children, not
17 for you to come and take over.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

19 MR. SANCHEZ: We -- when we -- when you
20 guys want to come here and do business, you need to
21 speak to us, not to our politicians. This town has
22 already been riddled with problems concerning our
23 politics. You come in here and take advantage of those
24 politics. I do not need to mention those politicians by
25 name. They are in this room and they know who they are.

1 We know who they are. We are their constituents. When
2 we do this, you guys need to do it with us. It's so far
3 along already. Everything was held in the back-talks.
4 You never spoke with us.

5 So this part, I want to talk to you-all.
6 You guys are the ones that are going to be concerned.
7 You guys are the ones that are going to be dealing with
8 this. These are our homes. We need to be the biggest
9 storm we can be, the biggest storm possible and they're
10 sorry. 'Cause I'm -- the longer we can hold them back,
11 the better. Do not go (inaudible). And do not go and
12 say yes. Do not agree with them. This is gonna be a
13 difficult fight and a very hard one.

14 I am pretty surprised at the turnout. I
15 was not expecting that. But you-all need to bring out
16 more people and more people need to show up. It's gonna
17 be difficult. Whether we stop them or not, we'll be a
18 big-ass storm on them.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Difficult, but not
20 impossible. Amen. Yes.

21 MR. SANCHEZ: Now, for our local
22 politicians, these people will sell you out as well. As
23 soon as they get what they want, you will be stuck with
24 us and you will have to answer us again. That's all I
25 gotta say. You're kicking us out of our homes.

1 MS. POOLE: We're just testing the
2 translation equipment. It'll just take us one minute
3 and then we'll reset. Thank you guys.

4 MS. McNAMARA: George Baxter, followed by
5 Alicia Gonzalez and David Kraus. Just a reminder to
6 please state your name and spelling before you begin
7 your remarks.

8 MR. BAXTER: My name is George Baxter,
9 B-A-X-T-E-R. Good morning. I'm a resident of Maverick
10 County. I live about a mile-and-a-half of the --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Baxter, please
12 talk directly into the microphone.

13 MR. BAXTER: Thank you. Okay. I'm a
14 resident of Maverick County. I live about a
15 mile-and-a-half from the proposed Puerto Verde bridges.
16 More importantly, along with about 50,000 other people
17 in Maverick County, our sole source of potable water is
18 the Eagle Pass Waterworks System, which draws its water
19 from the Rio Grande through a water intake at the north
20 end of Eagle Pass, just about a mile-and-a-half
21 downriver of the two Puerto Verde bridges.

22 My primary concern with the Draft EIS is
23 the apparent lack of concern shown by the Office of
24 Environmental Analysis about a possible hazardous spill
25 in the Rio Grande from either the rail or highway

1 bridges, both during construction or while in operation.
2 The Draft EIS states that if a release of hazardous
3 materials were to occur, it would involve a relatively
4 short duration of exposure and could be contained -- and
5 would be contained quickly. This is an assumption at
6 best and wishful thinking at worst. By definition,
7 accidents are unplanned and unpredictable and no one can
8 know ahead of time what their extent may be.

9 The Draft EIS goes on to say that the Eagle
10 Pass Waterworks System is required to "have updated risk
11 assessments and emergency response plans tailored to
12 specific incidents." In the event of a hazardous
13 release, the EIS states that the Waterworks's response,
14 quote, "might include cleaning up the spill and
15 temporarily restricting the use of a water body,"
16 unquote. Green Eagle Railroad's only responsibility,
17 according to the EIS, is to make a 911 call. Finishing
18 up, the EIS states that the Office of Environmental
19 Assessment [sic] is not recommending mitigation for
20 potentially hazardous materials released in surface
21 waters.

22 So, according to the EIS, the onus on
23 responding to a hazardous material spill is on the
24 potential victim, the Waterworks System, and not on the
25 potential perpetrator, the Green Eagle Railroad.

1 It would be better to mitigate this
2 supposedly low-probability event, which would
3 nevertheless have a devastating impact on the entire
4 population of Eagle Pass and Maverick County, in advance
5 and remove any possibility of it happening.

6 This would best be done by requiring Puerto
7 Verde to construct an emergency water intake in the Rio
8 Grande upriver of their two bridges and connect it to
9 the Waterworks water plant by the pipeline.

10 MS. McNAMARA: Mr. Baxter, I need you to
11 wrap up.

12 MR. BAXTER: Wrapping up: Puerto Verde
13 should pay 100 percent of the cost of this project and
14 it should be completed before construction of the
15 bridges begin. The fact that Puerto Verde is supposed
16 to receive eminent-domain authority in House Bill 74
17 currently before the Texas Legislature should simplify
18 the required land acquisition.

19 MS. McNAMARA: Okay. We're gonna --

20 MR. BAXTER: The health and wellbeing of
21 the citizens of Maverick County must have first priority
22 above all other considerations and I request that the
23 STB make these changes to the Draft EIS. Thank you.

24 MS. McNAMARA: Thank you. Alicia Gonzalez,
25 David Kraus, and then Roberto Soto.

1 MS. GONZALEZ: My name's Alicia Gonzalez,
2 A-L-I-C-I-A G-O-N-Z-A-L-E-Z. I have lived on
3 (inaudible) Street for 50 years. There are many things
4 that need to be addressed tonight: The noise pollution,
5 water pollution, flooding issues, and the extent of
6 research done by the cooperating agencies. But today,
7 I'm going to focus on safety.

8 The proposed railway Mr. Ruben Garibay and
9 State Representative Eddie Morales want to build would
10 be about a football field away from my house. Do you
11 know how close that is? For those of you that follow
12 football, you know that a touchdown can be made in less
13 than one minute from one field to the other end. If you
14 live near a railway and there was a derailment, how fast
15 could you get out of your house?

16 Let me tell you a little bit about my
17 neighbors. My 80 year-old mom with mobility issues
18 lives next door to me. My sister, on the other side.
19 She suffers from chronic-health problems. I live with
20 my husband and my son who cannot drive due to his
21 disability. Now you tell me how fast I can move my
22 family out of harm's way.

23 In your Draft Section S.3.2, Freight Rail
24 Safety, you state that in the unlikely event of an
25 incident and the release of hazardous materials were to

1 occur, it would involve relatively short duration of
2 exposure and be contained quickly. Wow. I'm glad the
3 cooperating agencies included a clairvoyant.

4 Do you know how long it took to contain the
5 mess at the East Palestine derailment in Ohio? In case
6 you don't know, it took two days, two days of toxic
7 fumes spewing into the air, contaminating the air, the
8 water and the soil. And that did not happen here in
9 Eagle Pass. Yet here, this report dares to assure us
10 that it would be quickly contained. This project is a
11 threat to our community and our environment.

12 Let's be honest, this railway's not for the
13 benefit of our residents. This is a project that lines
14 the pockets of our wealthy at the expense of us, the
15 people of Maverick County.

16 And lastly, this entire proposal has lacked
17 transparency from the beginning from County Judge
18 (inaudible) to commissioners (inaudible). We, the
19 residents, deserve better. For these reasons, I stand
20 firmly against the injustice to this community and say
21 no to the Puerto Verde Project. Thank you.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We the people have
23 spoken.

24 MS. McNAMARA: David Kraus and Roberto Soto
25 then Jesus Fuente.

1 MR. KRAUS: Can you hear me? I'm David
2 Kraus. I moved here in about 1987 and I've lived in
3 Eagle Pass off and on since then. Since 2017, Eagle
4 Pass has been my home. And it's unfortunate, but it was
5 hard for me to make a living in Eagle Pass, so I make my
6 living online doing marketing for companies, radio
7 stations, and so on.

8 And when Puerto Verde started, I have a big
9 concern, and the big concern is: We're fighting it for
10 a lot of different reasons, but at the same time, we're
11 holding back potential growth for a very poor county.
12 This county's one of the poorest in the United States
13 and it's going to stay that way if we continually fight
14 growth.

15 So that is what has made me decide I'm
16 starting EaglePass.online and we're going to start
17 having truth in the news and Eagle Pass is gonna start
18 receiving unfiltered news about Puerto Verde and other
19 issues, if needed. And I want to -- I want to add
20 transparency. Exactly.

21 I lived in Lockhart, Texas and went to high
22 school. In 1978, Walmart wanted to bring a large
23 distribution center into Lockhart, and everyone fought
24 it and fought it and fought it, and they opened in New
25 Braunfels in 1978. New Braunfels has collected those

1 taxes still today, and these are some of the things
2 we're gonna give up as community.

3 And as far as the trains, I live on El
4 Indio Highway, a mile from the bridge. Those trains
5 wake you up every night. We gotta fix 'em. I hope
6 someone resonates with this message. Thank you.

7 MS. McNAMARA: Roberto Soto, Jesus Fuente,
8 and Juanita Martinez.

9 MR. FUENTES: Could you turn off the slide?
10 I don't need that behind while I'm speaking. Thank you.
11 Appreciate you.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Turn off the slide.
13 It's a distraction when people are speaking.

14 MR. FUENTES: It's bias. Please, turn it
15 off. Thank you. Thank you everyone for this time. My
16 name is Jesse F. Fuentes, or Jesus F. Fuentes. I'm with
17 the Eagle Pass Border Coalition, and I'm here to speak
18 to you about this incredible pending disaster, what I
19 call a community killer.

20 I read this EIS statement, and it appears
21 that it's a little lacking. I recall when they were
22 here, they said they were gonna have eight agencies
23 participate; only two. I remember when they said that
24 it would be thorough. Yet, within this EIS report, I
25 see no mention, no mention of what's gonna happen to the

1 river, the Rio Grande, especially the water that
2 provides service for all of us; the intake valve of the
3 City of Eagle Pass water.

4 Now, this EIS says they want to build a
5 19-foot high, 130-foot wide earthen mound and they want
6 to set up 20-foot sound barriers. Do you know that they
7 will be moving a million-and-a-half metric tons of
8 earth? Now, you tell me that's not going to affect the
9 flow of the Rio Grande, all this earth moving within two
10 tight neighborhoods. And then they look at the
11 solutions or the proposed alternatives, and none of 'em
12 are acceptable, when all of the people standing in or
13 sitting in this room know that the best alternative is
14 not where they're projecting.

15 So I say no, no to this. It's seriously
16 flawed. I say that we go back and try it again. And we
17 do not want our city to suffer because, all of a sudden,
18 we've been maligned and mistreated for the last two
19 years by a state government, and here comes the federal
20 government now saying, guess what, we're gonna jam these
21 two bridges right in the middle of these Seco Mines
22 neighborhoods and we don't care what the heck you say.

23 Where is the community on this? Where is
24 our city representation on this? That EIS report says
25 that once this line is built, no more rail will go

1 beyond that point. No more rail. That's what this
2 report is recommending. They're gonna kill Eagle Pass.

3 I've got two main issues. One of 'em is
4 environmental and the other one is economics. I don't
5 want to see our community die. Support us and be there
6 and speak up. Thank you for your time.

7 MS. McNAMARA: Roberto Soto and Juanita
8 Martinez. Ms. Martinez?

9 MS. MARTINEZ: I'm sorry, I thought you
10 said another name before mine.

11 MS. McNAMARA: I did, but I don't know
12 where that person is.

13 MS. MARTINEZ: Hello everybody. I think
14 I'm gonna surprise a lot of people here because I was
15 born and raised here and I served the community every
16 day. Even today, I'm getting off the vote for the city
17 elections. I've been an environmentalist ever since my
18 girls were young, because actually, they're the ones
19 that made me an environmentalist. I fought the coal
20 mines with several people here, I recognize you, and --
21 because the coal mines were not going to benefit the
22 community at all. On the -- on the contrary, it was
23 gonna hurt our environment. There was a school about a
24 mile away from the coal mines, and the coal dust would
25 probably impact the health of a lot of children and the

1 community as a whole.

2 However, and listen to me carefully, I do
3 not see Puerto Verde in the same way. I -- I sometimes
4 find that people will oppose something for the sake of
5 opposing it. I hear some of the concerns. I hear some
6 of the false rhetoric, because when somebody says that
7 it's gonna hurt the river, this person that I do not
8 consider an environmentalist as a matter of fact, he
9 benefitted from the situation of the river and -- and
10 charged thousands of dollars to reporters to take 'em
11 through the river. I don't consider him an
12 environmentalist. Sorry.

13 So with this, I just am concerned that we
14 are fighting progress. And there's been some false
15 rhetoric from this lady that continually lies that I
16 have personally received money from Mr. Garibay. That
17 is false. I have not. As a matter of fact, I am famous
18 for not ever -- and I say it publicly because I can
19 sustain it: I have never received money to back any
20 political campaign, and that includes the Kickapoo that
21 we helped.

22 Now, the only thing I am saying here, and I
23 care about my community, is that if we're serious about
24 zero environmental impact, then we should all move to a
25 shack that doesn't have air conditioning and start

1 riding our bikes to work instead of the giant trucks,
2 instead of those giant trucks that guzzle tons and tons
3 of gasoline.

4 So are we willing to do that? Our daily
5 habits make a far greater impact on the -- on the local
6 environment, and they are not likely to cause to bring
7 any benefits to the community.

8 MS. McNAMARA: All right. Your time is --

9 MS. MARTINEZ: I know that some of you-all
10 will not agree with me, and that's fine, but I think
11 progress is very important. Thank you.

12 MS. McNAMARA: Enriqueta Diaz, Rolando
13 Salinas, and Lynn Balderas. All right. And I just want
14 to remind everybody: We really need to stay to the
15 three minutes. I'm trying to remind you when you're
16 getting close.

17 (Off-record conversation.)

18 MS. DIAZ: My name is Enriqueta Diaz, and I
19 would just like to bring something out that the previous
20 person indicated. She is the president to the
21 Democratic Party in Maverick County, and I will never
22 say that she took money from Mr. Garibay for herself,
23 but she was helping me with the Republican Party until
24 Mr. Garibay gave her \$10,000 to run the campaign for the
25 Democrats. So, yes, she has received money and there is

1 personal interest and she does not live anywhere near
2 where this bridge, this railroad is gonna be. So it may
3 not affect her, but it affects a lot of other people,
4 and I'm one of them.

5 My family lives adjacent on Barrera Street,
6 and from the onset, ladies -- I did mention this the
7 last time you guys were here. From the onset of the
8 Puerto Verde International Bridge for Mr. Garibay,
9 Commissioner's Court, who endorsed the Puerto Verde
10 International Bridge for Mr. Garibay, they have never
11 listened to this very carefully. They have never --
12 Commissioner's Court has never approved a single item on
13 their agenda the way the law requires for the public to
14 know what the heck they're doing with Puerto Verde.
15 Everything has been done behind locked doors.

16 And I understand the limitation of three
17 minutes and I'm gonna try to respect that. But when
18 they pay the lobbyists to go and lobby with all the
19 politicians in Austin and in Washington, they get all
20 the time available to brainwash with a bunch of lies
21 they're telling our federal and state officials,
22 including the conniving way Mr. Eddie Morales has been
23 representing Mr. Garibay on Bill 74. Who endorsed Bill
24 74? It was not the school, it was not the County, and
25 it sure as heck wasn't the City.

1 But yet, you people come over here to give
2 us two or three minutes when they haven't told us
3 anything about what the heck's going on or what the
4 plans are, good or bad. That's what has our community
5 in an uproar.

6 MS. McNAMARA: Ms. Diaz, I need you to wrap
7 up.

8 MS. DIAZ: There has been a (inaudible)
9 from the very beginning. And I'm gonna close with this.
10 I'm gonna close with this: The Fifth Circuit Court of
11 Appeals in New Orleans has given a ruling, and if you're
12 an attorney, you understand exactly what I'm saying.
13 They issued a ruling published. For those that are
14 attorneys, published means that it's a new-placed law
15 before the United States Supreme Court. And they have
16 ruled that Mister -- the County judge has no authority
17 to do a single decision for the people of Maverick
18 County unless the Commissioner's Court has approved it,
19 and there is no action being taken. Everything has been
20 done behind locked doors. So from the very beginning,
21 it's been a violation of the law, violation of our
22 constitutional rights, and I say no to everything
23 Mr. Garibay has to do. He can go back to Nuevo Laredo,
24 where he's from. Thank you.

25 MS. McNAMARA: All right. Thank you,

1 ma'am. Rolando Salinas, Lynn Balderas, and Javier
2 Riojas.

3 (Off-record conversation.)

4 MS. McNAMARA: We need to continue on with
5 the comments.

6 MR. SALINAS: Good afternoon, everyone.
7 Welcome back to the beautiful City of Eagle Pass. My
8 name is Rolando Salinas. I'm the mayor of the City of
9 Eagle Pass. One year ago, I stood here before you-all,
10 and I stand here today because this is a project that I
11 have a lot of issues with and I think it'll be
12 detrimental to the City of Eagle Pass. I am here
13 speaking for myself. I'm not speaking on behalf of
14 Council. I speak as the mayor of this great city.

15 I believe you made a statement, ma'am, that
16 this rail would replace the one that's already going
17 through the city of Eagle Pass. Union Pacific goes
18 through the City of Eagle Pass. They've been very firm
19 that they're not abandoning that rail line. Union
20 Pacific has stated in paper they're not gonna abandon
21 that rail line, so this will only add another rail to
22 the center of the city of Eagle Pass. It's already very
23 congested there.

24 As we saw from this bias presentation, we
25 did see some photographs of some beautiful houses, the

1 vast subdivision. People bought there because they want
2 to buy their home, their forever home, and now five of
3 those houses, they're up for sale because they know that
4 this is gonna be terrible for their homes. These
5 people, a lot of them, they don't have -- they don't
6 have the resources to get up and go.

7 I understand that this is a project, a lot
8 of big investors have put their money in this. But
9 these big investors, they don't live in Eagle Pass.
10 They're not gonna have to deal with the traffic, because
11 this rail and the bridge, it's gonna add additional
12 traffic, which is gonna increase the amount of accidents
13 in this area, a city that already has a lot of
14 accidents. I know. Being a personal injury lawyer, I
15 see a lot of accidents in that area specifically.

16 I'm also very concerned with our water
17 supply. As you know, we're facing a drought. We have
18 to protect the water. This is gonna be north of our
19 water system, and I'm worried about a potential hazard
20 where there's a big contamination to our water supply.

21 I know that this is gonna affect the city
22 not only the environmental aspect, but also in
23 economics. There's been a report done by an expert. I
24 know about experts because I hire them all the time.
25 The paramen (phonetic) report that says, oh, this

1 project is gonna bring 200,000 jobs to the community,
2 well, those are -- those are numbers by a biased paid
3 expert that I think they're false. And unfortunately,
4 there's been a lot of information, mainly that this rail
5 is gonna help the city of Eagle Pass, and it's not,
6 because it's not gonna displace the existing rail that
7 already cuts through the City of Eagle Pass.

8 MS. McNAMARA: If you could wrap up.

9 MR. SALINAS: Yes. I know a gentleman made
10 a mention about local officials. I'm here standing as a
11 local official. I've never been -- accepted one penny
12 from Mr. Garibay or anybody of the Puerto Verde, and I
13 stand against this project. Thank you.

14 MS. McNAMARA: Lynn Balderas and Javier
15 Riojas. And then, I apologize, I have Malena, but I
16 don't have your last name. But Lynn Balderas.

17 MR. BALDERAS: Good morning. My name is
18 Lynn Brandon Balderas. I am president and founder of
19 the Elm Creek Park and Greenbelt Advocacy. I founded it
20 back in September of 2012, so it's been well over a
21 decade that I've advocated and accomplished a lot of
22 things for the Elm Creek Park. I left Eagle Pass in
23 2020 to pursue a bachelor's in forestry and public
24 administration, and I've completed my master's degree
25 from UNT.

1 My statement about Puerto Verde is this:
2 We need to support growth. The mindset of this city has
3 had is stopping growth no matter what. They've chased
4 away all kinds of business. They've chased away
5 higher-paying jobs, which means our families, our
6 siblings had to leave town to work in other areas.
7 There's less higher-paying jobs. The jobs that are here
8 do not pay very well, and thus has led to poor
9 college-educated retention rates.

10 Puerto Verde, by what the flyer states,
11 promises to bring opportunities to our economic slump to
12 one of the poorest towns in the United States. You go
13 to the colonias, and it's poor. You go to north and
14 south, it's very, very, very poor. And it's disgusting
15 that our leaders, for many, many years, who claim to be
16 environmentalists, who claim to care for the young
17 people, who claim to all of that stuff, have not done
18 anything. All they've done is to turn a blind side to
19 poverty.

20 Puerto Verde needs to implement
21 hazard-mitigation strategies such as reducing
22 flood-plain developments, minimizing (inaudible) to Elm
23 Creel and Rio Grande and protecting the Elm Creek.

24 With the recent clearings in the Puerto
25 Verde property and hotel, there's been a lot of things

1 that were done without the permits, so that's my main
2 concern, that is, it needs to be permitted and it needs
3 to be protected. I've collaborated with the County in
4 the past by saving trees along the banks of Elm Creek
5 during flood control efforts before Puerto Verde bought
6 the property.

7 MS. McNAMARA: Please begin wrapping up.

8 MR. BALDERAS: I'm concluding it. I
9 strongly believe that the Elm Creek deserves to be
10 protected and made into a protected park. My message to
11 Puerto Verde is to donate (inaudible) along the Elm
12 Creek Park. Thank you so much.

13 MS. McNAMARA: Thank you. Javier Riojas
14 and then Malena. And I apologize, I just can't make out
15 your last name.

16 MR. RIOJAS: My name is Javier Riojas,
17 J-A-V-I-E-R R-I-O-J-A-S, and I represent Martha
18 Ballesteros, whose home is adjacent to the Seco Creek
19 where the proposed rail line will run. She opposes the
20 construction of the rail line as proposed and the
21 alternative provided. Both will result in the same
22 noisy eyesore running through her backyard. Both will
23 result in the taking of residential and business
24 properties in the Barrera Street area.

25 We were not provided a legitimate,

1 reasonable alternative that genuinely takes the proposed
2 construction out of what we consider an urban area.

3 While Seco Mines is a colonia, it is nevertheless a
4 populated area. We cannot let outside forces dictate
5 our growth. We have such forces building unwanted
6 fences in our community and imposing tariffs and other
7 barriers that impact our trade with our neighbor to the
8 south. Because of these outside forces, we will not
9 have the magnitude of trade with Mexico that Green Eagle
10 Railroad projects. Due to this, Ms. Ballesteros is
11 advocating for the No-Action Alternative.

12 Realistically speaking, we do not have our
13 existing international bridges working at peak
14 efficiency because of federal personnel shortages. We
15 don't see that improving, as forces outside of our
16 community are strengthening rather than expanding the
17 federal workforce. We simply would not have the federal
18 personnel to operate more international bridges in our
19 community.

20 The No-Action Alternative will also protect
21 the environment along Seco Creek and Elm Creek, where
22 endangered ocelot and (inaudible) sightings have been
23 documented. The No-Action Alternative would also
24 protect cultural and water resources and Native-American
25 sacred sites, as it is well documented that the Pacuache

1 Indian Tribe was native to this region. Thus, the
2 Pacuache Indian Tribe of Texas should be consulted at
3 every available opportunity that arises in these
4 proceedings.

5 MS. McNAMARA: I'll need you to start
6 wrapping up.

7 MR. RIOJAS: All right. Furthermore, we do
8 not have the water resources and other infrastructure
9 necessary to deal with the influx of population that
10 Green Eagle envisions will be necessary to accommodate
11 the proposed construction. As it is, our existing
12 infrastructure is already overburdened under existing
13 conditions. There is no need to exacerbate the
14 situation, especially knowing that our water reservoir
15 and Amistad, due to the drought, has led to water
16 restrictions both domestic and agricultural.

17 MS. McNAMARA: All right. Mr. Riojas, your
18 time's up.

19 MR. RIOJAS: And we would urge the Surface
20 Transportation Board to go with the No-Action
21 Alternative. Thank you.

22 MS. McNAMARA: And Malena. Again, I
23 apologize, I don't have your last name. Okay. I have
24 no one else who is already registered to speak. Are
25 there any additional people who would like to speak? I

1 don't have anymore pre-registered speakers. Is there
2 anybody else who would like to speak?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just have a
4 question: Are you-all gonna go over the slideshow that
5 was in the background?

6 MS. McNAMARA: We're not going to be doing
7 that or taking questions. I apologize.

8 MS. POOLE: Thank you. Why don't we go
9 ahead and take a ten-minute break? We'll see if anybody
10 new signs up.

11 (Break taken from 12:31 p.m. to 12:48 p.m.)

12 MS. POOLE: We'd like to restart
13 the meeting. We do not, at this moment, have any
14 additional speakers, so we'll start this meeting off
15 after everybody sits down with the opportunity to open
16 the floor back up to new speakers. Again, we are
17 here until 1:30. Our goal as a federal agency today is
18 to get your comments on the EIS and our analysis. If
19 there are people here who haven't spoken yet and want to
20 speak, let us know.

21 We are here until 1:30. I have no new
22 speakers signed in. I'm going to be here until 1:30, so
23 feel free to talk to me. I'd appreciate it.

24 I'd like to just remind you, as you're
25 visiting with your neighbors and friends, that I'm still

1 here until 1:30 to take any comments on the docket for
2 the project. If you haven't come up to speak and you
3 would like to this morning, please let us know. We'll
4 also be here this evening. We'll be back this evening.
5 Thank you.

6 I have a new speaker, if you guys would
7 like to sit down and listen to additional comments on
8 the Draft EIS for Green Eagle Railroad. Thank you very
9 much.

10 MS. McNAMARA: You have three minutes.
11 I'll try to give you a reminder at 30 seconds. Just
12 state your name and spelling as well for the court
13 reporter.

14 MS. GRAWAL: Hello. Thank you for being
15 here. My name's Amerika Grawal. I'm here as a
16 representative of the Frontera Federation. We advocate
17 for border communities about the issues that we face.
18 As you probably have noticed, we're a very poor
19 community, and the tax revenues that are received from
20 property owners do not fully cover the needs of the
21 people of Eagle Pass and Maverick County. This includes
22 essentials things like water, things like electricity.
23 It definitely extends to roads.

24 I'm also a concerned advocate for our
25 community, our environment, and our children's future.

1 I am here to voice strong opposition to the proposed
2 Puerto Verde Private Bridge. This project has been done
3 without meaningful public engagement and it threatens to
4 displace families through eminent domain and it fails to
5 address critical infrastructure and safety concerns.

6 I don't have the background to go and find
7 all the details, but July 7th of 2023, Maverick County
8 pushed forward the first proposal, which then grew into
9 Puerto Verde Project. The project became a reality in
10 October of 2023. We later met with the U.S. State
11 Department, who are in Laredo, and they told us that
12 they had submitted their recommendation for the Bridge
13 Project before we, the people of Eagle Pass, had any
14 awareness of what was going on.

15 After meeting with us, they said, if we
16 knew then what we know now, we never would have made the
17 recommendations. All of this has happened without the
18 mandated open-air discussions and without soliciting the
19 input of the people of Eagle Pass. In addition, the
20 people of Eagle Pass have nothing to gain from the
21 project directly and a lot to lose.

22 You've probably heard some of the issues
23 about the project line on a waterway, the Elm Creek
24 Waterway. This means that all of the pollution,
25 everything else is actually below grade.

1 Especially of interest is the
2 waste-chemical holding plant that was present in what
3 you showed earlier. The fact that it does not appear on
4 your website right now is of great concern to me. I'm
5 asking you today to extend the length of time that
6 you're doing this initial survey to find out what
7 happened to that waste-chemical holding pond. When we
8 looked at it, it was below grade, and that water flows
9 directly into the Rio Grande above the City of Eagle
10 Pass. The intake of the City of Eagle Pass is the only
11 source of water for Maverick County. That is also the
12 only source of water for Webb County going down the
13 river.

14 There are many issues with this. Lack of
15 public input at the beginning is a huge issue. The use
16 of public dollars for private benefit is a massive,
17 massive issue. But most importantly, this project lacks
18 the necessary infrastructure to support it. It's being
19 put in an area that's already overbuilt and doesn't have
20 the roads. If we were to start building today, it would
21 be 2032 before we had sufficient roads. This group
22 plans to use eminent domain to bulldoze and create more
23 private infrastructure, displacing families that have
24 spent a full generation trying to get homes --

25 MS. McNAMARA: All right. Thank you.

1 That's your time.

2 Are there any other people who would like
3 to speak? We still have about 13 minutes left before
4 the end of the meeting. As we finish up here, I would
5 like to remind you guys that we'll be back here from
6 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. tonight to run through the same
7 process as this morning to hopefully get some additional
8 comments. On Thursday evening, we'll have an online
9 meeting for any of your peers, stakeholders, or
10 constituents that were unable to get away for our time
11 here today. Okay. Thank you so much.

12 All right. I'm going to go ahead and close
13 the meeting. We'll be back here at 6:00 tonight. We
14 thank you so much for coming. We hope that you bring
15 some friends so we can hear some of your comments on the
16 Green Eagle Railroad EIS.

17 (Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

THE STATE OF TEXAS }
COUNTY OF HIDALGO }

CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, GUILLERMO RODRIGUEZ ZERMENO, Certified
Shorthand Reporter in and for the State of Texas, do
hereby certify that I was present at the time and place
hereinbefore set forth; that I reported the proceedings
in stenographic shorthand, and that my stenographic
notes were thereafter reduced to writing by
computer-assisted transcription by me and/or under my
supervision.

I further certify that the foregoing is a
lawful, true and correct transcript of the proceedings
had upon the taking of said meeting.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND, I have hereto set my
official signature on this the 15 day of May, 2025.



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