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Mr. Eddie Morales, Jr.
Texas House of Representatives
100 S. Monroe St.
Eagle Pass, TX 78852

Dear Mr. Morales,

This letter is in support of the Green Eagle Railroad and Puerto Verde in Eagle Pass and Maverick County, Texas. I have a Ph.D. in Geography (Fluvial Geomorphology). I have studied rivers for over 20 years and my primary area of research is the Rio Grande at Eagle Pass, Texas. I was also born and raised in Eagle Pass, Texas and visit often as my family and my study site are located there.

I am familiar with the document *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Green Eagle Railroad: Eagle Pass & Maverick County, Texas (Docket No. FD 36652)* and have reviewed the impact of the railroad and associated bridges on the local environment where construction is proposed. My professional opinion on the construction and placement of the railroad and bridge is that the proposed plan would be beneficial to the community because it would 1) avoid impacting a higher population area while increasing commerce, 2) cause minimal impact due to the hydrography of the area, and 3) have significantly lower impact than other alterations already occurring on the floodplain.

First, the proposed sections would alleviate many of the environmental problems currently experienced around the existing bridges. The new construction would allow rail traffic to bypass a large section of the Eagle Pass population and the main urban area of Maverick County. Instead, the proposed routes would allow traffic to cross the border some distance away from the main population. This would reduce traffic and idling which currently causes air quality issues on the already busy international bridges. The additional construction would also reduce the distance traveled by the trains coming into the area which would cut down on the resources used for transport. Therefore, the additional construction would have an overall positive environmental impact over the long term compared to the traffic configuration currently in place, all while allowing for increased and more efficient commerce which will benefit the community.

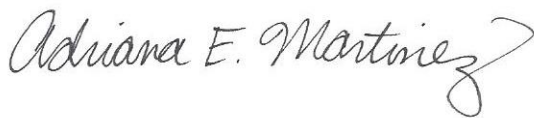
Second, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has discussed the impact on the hydrography of the area, and I have found that there will be minimal negative impacts both during construction and over the long term. Both the Northern and Southern Rail alternatives that are proposed will only have one in-water pier which minimizes the disruption to the river channel directly. The EIS also states that the Southern Rail alternative is preferred. I find this option

preferable as well. First because it allows for additional river distance between the commercial vehicle bridge and the rail bridge, which allows the river a longer distance to run freely before interacting with the one in-water pier on the rail bridge, and because it crosses Seco Creek only twice (compared to four times for the “Northern Rail” alternative). Second, the Southern Rail is on higher ground compared to the Northern option and therefore a greater distance from Seco Creek which minimizes the rail’s impact on the creek. Seco Creek is also an intermittent stream, meaning that it does not have water present year-round, so any water impacts will be minimal and only immediately following major storms. In addition, the EIS states that during construction every effort will be made to meet the Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) permit requirements with regard to runoff, pollutants, and sediment. This means that they will have erosion and sediment controls in place to mitigate any negative effects while construction is occurring.

Finally, the geographic area where construction is proposed has already undergone decades of human alterations and therefore this area will not be drastically changed with the addition of this infrastructure. The area already has man-made ditches, as well as gravel and dirt roads for residences, agriculture, and border monitoring. There is also an invasive cane that occupies much of the vegetated bank along the Rio Grande and Seco Creek which is evidence of an already disturbed ecosystem. It is my professional opinion that the addition of the rail line and bridge will not significantly alter the area.

Overall, I have examined the draft EIS and it is clear that the substantial planning required of construction of this nature has been occurring. Any changes to the landscape are well documented and considered and options are selected in order to minimize any impacts. This is in stark contrast to much of the infrastructure already on the Rio Grande floodplain at Eagle Pass including federal fence sections, state fence, concertina wire, buoys, and empty train containers which did not undergo similar scrutiny and are causing far more damage because they are located immediately along the river for long distances. I do not feel that the Green Eagle construction will cause significant environmental impacts on the river or the landscape. Should you require additional information from me, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adriana E. Martinez". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, connected style.

Dr. Adriana Martinez
Professor
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