



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 2042

Office of Environmental Analysis

February 11, 2026

Jay C. Johnson
Venable, LLP
600 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001

By email at jcjohnson@venable.com

Re: Docket No. FD 36633, Plaquemines Port Harbor and Terminal District – New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway Mainline Extension – in Plaquemines Parish, La.

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for your August 8, 2025, letter regarding Plaquemines Port Harbor and Terminal District's (PPHTD) proposal to construct approximately 10 miles of rail line (the Line) in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. According to your letter, a waiver of the requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 1105.6(a), which generally provides for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for rail line construction proposals, should be granted in this proceeding because PPHTD believes that the proposed project is unlikely to have any significant, unmitigable environmental effects and that an Environmental Assessment (EA) would satisfy the Board's obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.6(d), the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) is granting your request. Based on the information available to date, OEA agrees that the potential environmental impacts would not be significant, and any impacts could most likely be addressed through appropriate mitigation measures. OEA has determined that the preparation of an EA is appropriate in this case for the following reasons:

1. PPHTD is a public corporation and political subdivision of the State of Louisiana and is governed by the Plaquemines Parish Commission Council. According to PPHTD's 2024 Master Plan, the Line would be located in an area planned for port development along the Mississippi River and would serve the future Louisiana Gateway Container Terminal. Therefore, the Line is consistent with local plans for land use in the area.
2. The Line would parallel either the Louisiana Highway 23 (LA 23) or the old New Orleans and Lower Coast Railroad roadbed that historically operated from 1890 to the 1970s. The Line would therefore result in minimal impacts to the existing already disturbed land use in the area.

3. OEA visited the project site on December 15, 2022. The Line is located near one residential community, the community of Ironton. In its letter, PPHTD stated that it modified its original route to move the Line farther away from the Ironton community. Because there are few residences located near the Line, the proposed project is unlikely to adversely affect sensitive noise or vibration receptors.
4. OEA conducted preliminary agency and tribal consultation and requested formal comments during which minimal concerns regarding the Line were raised from relevant agencies and tribes.
5. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapper and Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) database, the Line would traverse lands that may contain wetlands subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act and/or potential habitat for the federally listed tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) under the Endangered Species Act. Any potential impacts to wetlands and federally listed species habitat from construction of the Line (e.g., tree and vegetation clearing activities) would be limited to the 100-foot right-of-way and would be addressed through further interagency consultation if necessary.
6. The Line is located within Plaquemines Parish, LA, which is designated as an attainment area under the Clean Air Act. OEA understands that 2-3 trains per week would move on the Line. Construction and operation of the Line is expected to reduce truck traffic benefiting overall air quality. Potential impacts to air quality from construction and operation of similar lines with small volumes of expected rail traffic have been minimal.

OEA will prepare a Draft EA and make it available for public review and comment. OEA will then prepare a Final EA that will respond to the substantive comments received on the Draft EA and include any appropriate modifications or additions to its analysis. The Final EA will also set forth OEA's final recommended mitigation measures to the Board. The Board will consider the entire environmental record, including the Draft EA, all comments received on the Draft EA, and the Final EA, when making its final decision in this proceeding. However, should the EA process disclose unanticipated impacts that are significant and unable to be mitigated, OEA would require the preparation of an EIS at that time.

If we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact Andrea Poole of my staff at 202-934-3330 or by email at Andrea.Poole@stb.gov.

Sincerely,



Danielle Gosselin
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis