

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
AMONG
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD, NEVADA GOLD RAIL LLC and VANASSE
HANGEN BRUSTLIN, INC.**

RE: ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND PREPARATION OF APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION BY NEVADA GOLD RAIL LLC OF A NEW RAIL LINE IN EUREKA AND LANDER COUNTIES, NEVADA

I. Introduction and Purpose

- A. Nevada Gold Rail LLC (NGM Rail) intends to file for authority from the Surface Transportation Board (Board) in Docket No. FD 36889 to construct approximately 60 miles of new rail line in Eureka and Lander Counties, Nevada.
- B. When making its final decision in this proceeding, the Board will consider the potential environmental impacts of constructing the rail line and any rail-related alternatives. The Board will be the lead agency for preparing the environmental documentation required for the project, either an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.4(j) and 1105.10(d), the Board, through its Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA), has selected and NGM Rail has agreed to engage, at NGM Rail's expense, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (Contractor) as the independent third-party contractor for this proposal. The Contractor shall assist OEA in conducting the environmental review and preparing the environmental documentation¹ related to the NGM Rail's proposal. The Contractor's scope of work, approach, and activities shall be under the sole supervision, direction, and control of OEA.
- C. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) summarizes the relationship among the Contractor, NGM Rail, and OEA, as set forth in applicable regulations and Board policy, regarding the conditions and procedures each party must follow in preparing all environmental documentation. The MOU does not supersede or amend, and is made expressly subject to, the requirements of NEPA, and, to the extent applicable, related environmental laws, and 49 C.F.R. Part 1105.

¹ The terms "environmental documentation" and "environmental document(s)" embrace EAs, EISs, and any other reports, studies, surveys, or related documents.

- D. NGM Rail, the Contractor, and OEA agree to work within the framework of this MOU to develop an efficient method to complete the environmental review for the proposed project. OEA shall maintain overall responsibility for the documentation, analysis, methodology, consultation, and mitigation related to the environmental review process. OEA shall direct, evaluate, oversee, and approve the environmental review process.

II. Document Process

OEA will prepare, on behalf of the Board, the environmental document (EA or EIS) for agency and public review. OEA will independently draft any recommended mitigation measures, based on its review of potential environmental impacts of the project for the Board to consider imposing in its final decision should the Board decide to grant authority.

III. Agreement between NGM Rail and the Contractor

- A. Any contract between NGM Rail and the Contractor, and any subcontracts, shall be consistent with the provisions of the MOU.
- B. The terms of the MOU shall override any contradictory or conflicting terms regarding the scope and performance of any work to be conducted under any contract entered into between NGM Rail and the Contractor; provided, however, that the foregoing shall not limit the rights of NGM Rail and the Contractor to contract on terms which require the work to be performed cost-effectively.
- C. The contract between the Contractor and NGM Rail shall specifically provide, and the Contractor shall represent, that (1) the Contractor and any subcontractors do not and shall not have any financial or economic interest in Applicants or any entity or person directly or otherwise affiliated with NGM Rail except for payment for services rendered in connection with the preparation of all required environmental documentation, and except for services rendered pursuant to other agreements not prohibited by the MOU, and (2) there is no agreement between NGM Rail, or any other person or entity and the Contractor regarding future employment that is contingent upon the Contractor's performance under this contract. The Contractor shall concurrently execute a disclosure statement and submit it to both OEA and NGM Rail, before beginning any work under OEA's direction. It is understood that the Contractor and any subcontractors have not been employed to conduct any environmental analysis related to the project for

NGM Rail, or for any other person or entity, and, therefore, can be retained as independent third-party contractor(s).

D. Restrictions on other work:

- (1) Prior to commencement of work, the Contractor shall identify a core team of personnel who will be the only personnel performing the requirements in the Work Plan described in Section VII;
- (2) No employee of the Contractor or employee of any subcontractor, who is a part of the Contractor's core team committed to the environmental review process, shall engage in (a) other work for NGM Rail or any entity or person directly or otherwise affiliated with NGM Rail during this proceeding or (b) any work, relating to the proceeding, for any party to this proceeding at any time;
- (3) Except as provided in subsection (1), no other employee of the Contractor or other employee of any subcontractor shall, unless OEA is provided prior notice of and approves such work, engage in other work for NGM Rail or any entity or person directly or otherwise affiliated with NGM Rail during this proceeding; and
- (4) No employee of the Contractor or other employee of any subcontractor shall engage in any work for any entity, other than NGM Rail, relating to the proceeding before the Board.

E. NGM Rail shall bear the costs incurred by the Contractor, and by any subcontractor engaged by the Contractor to help in preparing the required environmental documentation to implement NEPA and related environmental laws. The Contractor and any subcontractors shall work under the direction of OEA and shall be subject to the provisions of Section III.C and Section III.D. NGM Rail agrees to hold harmless and indemnify the United States of America and the Board with respect to any and all claims, demands, causes of action, and the like, which may arise in performing the work under the contract between the Contractor and NGM Rail.

F. Any contract between the Contractor and NGM Rail shall specifically limit any remedies available to the Contractor and subcontractors upon termination of the contract to affirmatively relieve the United States of America, the Board, and any officer, agent, or employee, from any liability from terminating the contract.

IV. Contractor Responsibilities

- A. The Contractor may engage subcontractors to perform work related to environmental review of the project, subject to the provisions of Section III.C and Section III.D. All work performed by the Contractor or any subcontractors shall be under the sole direction, control, supervision, and final approval of OEA. The Contractor and subcontractors, if any, will act as the agent(s) of the Board, not NGM Rail, in performing its/their duties.
- B. The Contractor shall provide:
 - (1) Appropriate expertise in the areas of environmental concern (including, but not limited to, air quality, wetlands, biological resources, geotechnical resources, hydrology, land use, safety, noise, social and economic, and cultural/historic resources);
 - (2) A good working knowledge of environmental laws, applicable laws and regulations (including environmental regulations) administered or promulgated by the Board, NEPA and other applicable federal regulations, state laws and regulations, and applicable local ordinances and regulations;
 - (3) The capacity to perform environmental impact analysis and prepare appropriate environmental documentation;
 - (4) Thorough, readable, technically sound, and informative environmental documents, as well as related charts, maps, diagrams, etc.;
 - (5) Representatives to attend and/or facilitate meetings with federal, state, regional, and local agencies, other interested parties, and NGM Rail for exchanging and obtaining information, explaining the notice and related environmental concerns and impacts, and receiving comments in preparing the required environmental documentation;
 - (6) Expertise in data management; and
 - (7) Assistance to OEA in ensuring that the data collection, analyses, and methodologies for the environmental documents are complete, accurate,

and relevant to OEA's needs for the environmental review of the notice under NEPA.

- C. The Contractor shall maintain and provide OEA upon request:
 - (1) Adequate record-keeping and reporting systems to assure preservation of all data gathered, including, for example, surveys, studies, peer-reviewed reports;
 - (2) Logs summarizing all telephone calls, meetings, document reviews, and other substantive communications with OEA, NGM Rail, local governments, governmental agencies, citizens' groups, and any other interested parties; and
 - (3) Lists of all agencies, other railroads, citizens' groups, organizations, and individuals (including their respective addresses and telephone numbers) contacted in preparing the environmental documentation.
- D. The Contractor shall perform the work in a timely, responsive, satisfactory, and cost-effective manner, pursuant to a work schedule developed with OEA in coordination with NGM Rail and approved by OEA.
- E. The Contractor shall assist OEA in coordinating the exchange of all relevant environmental information and technical data/studies related to the notice and all required environmental documentation among OEA staff, NGM Rail's staff and representatives, the Contractor, and any subcontractors.
- F. The Contractor, and any subcontractor, shall submit directly to OEA any and all work the Contractor, or any subcontractor, performs in preparing all required environmental documentation, studies, surveys, etc. The Contractor, and any subcontractor, shall treat all work conducted in connection with the environmental review as confidential. The Contractor, and any subcontractors, shall not disclose any of their work or release any of the underlying work papers, drafts, or other materials prepared under the contract to anyone, including NGM Rail, without OEA's express authorization. The Contractor, and any subcontractors, will treat communications with OEA and other Federal agencies about the content of the environmental document as confidential and not release any such communications without OEA's express authorization.

- G. In no case shall NGM Rail be provided the opportunity to modify or edit the Contractor's work prior to submission to OEA, without OEA's express authorization.
- H. The Contractor shall follow the directions and instructions of OEA and incorporate them into the environmental document(s) in a timely and responsive manner. The Contractor shall submit preliminary and final drafts of any documents to OEA for final review and approval.
- I. The Contractor shall provide OEA access to and the right to review all procedures and underlying data used in the Contractor's development and preparation of all environmental documents. This includes, but is not limited to, field reports/surveys, technical studies and analyses, subcontractor reports, and interviews with concerned private and public parties, whether or not such information may be reflected in draft, supplemental, or final environmental documents submitted to OEA.
- J. The Contractor, and any subcontractors, shall cooperate fully with OEA in organizing, participating in, and conducting any public workshops, informational meetings, and other meetings, as OEA determines are necessary, to foster public understanding of and/or participation in the environmental review process, and to assess potential environmental impacts and develop mitigation measures related to the application.
- K. The Contractor will assist OEA in reviewing comments received during the environmental review process, will draft a summary of rail-related comments, and will coordinate analysis of these comments with OEA.
- L. The Contractor shall assist OEA in preparing the required environmental documentation, environmental recommendations, selection of alternatives, and development of mitigation measures.
- M. The Contractor's Project Manager and other technical experts, as appropriate, shall be available to attend all meetings, briefings, consultations, and site visits as OEA deems necessary. The Project Manager shall devote as much time to environmental review of the project as is necessary to assure the Contractor meets its responsibilities under this MOU. This work commitment will extend for the entire time necessary to complete the environmental review for the project.

- N. Except as specifically authorized by OEA, the Contractor and any of its subcontractors shall refer all media/press inquiries directly to OEA.
- O. As needed, the Contractor will provide technical expertise and administrative support to OEA during preparation of the Board's decision and in addressing any environmental issues arising in the Board's consideration of this proceeding. In the event of any appeal from a Board decision in this proceeding, the parties hereto shall at that time determine the need for and terms of the Contractor's services in connection with judicial review of that decision.
- P. Contractor shall retain all project-related environmental and historic documents, including supporting documentation, emails, project files, reports and drafts for at least 3 years beyond issuance of the final decision by the Board, at least 3 years beyond the close of any Board imposed oversight period, or until the conclusion of any appellate proceedings related to the application, whichever is longest. Documentation for Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) or Programmatic Agreements (PA) under the National Historic Preservation Act shall be maintained for 3 years after the stipulations of the MOA or PA have been satisfied.
- Q. Security Requirements:
- (1) Adjudication: Any employee of the Contractor or employee of any subcontractor who requires physical or logical access to STB information systems for the Contractor to meet its responsibilities pursuant to the MOU must undergo a federal background investigation and adjudication to determine fitness for duty, consistent with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) standards and federal adjudicative guidelines;
 - (2) HSPD-12 Compliance: In accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) and Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 201, any employee of the Contractor or employee of any subcontractor performing under this MOU who requires physical or logical access to STB information systems for the Contractor to meet its responsibilities pursuant to the MOU must complete the Personal Identity Verification (PIV) process prior to being granted access;
 - (3) System Access: Contractors must log into STB information systems only through STB-issued Government Furnished Equipment (GFE); and

- (4) Access Control: No employee of the Contractor or employee of any subcontractor shall be permitted access to STB facilities or information systems until adjudication has been completed and a PIV or other alternative phishing-resistant credential has been issued in compliance with federal requirements.
- R. The Contractor shall submit invoices to NGM Rail on a monthly basis and shall concurrently provide a copy of each invoice to OEA. An invoice shall be considered unpaid if NGM Rail fails to pay the invoice within 60 days of receipt. In the event of two consecutive unpaid invoices, the Contractor shall notify OEA as soon as practicable. If the Contractor determines that it will stop work associated with the environmental review process because of two or more consecutive unpaid invoices, the Contractor will notify OEA and NGM Rail within three business days of making that determination.

V. NGM Rail Responsibilities

- A. NGM Rail shall retain the Contractor to assist OEA in preparing all required environmental documentation and services, as that assistance and its costs are defined by a contract to be negotiated and executed by NGM Rail and the Contractor, and in the Work Plan described in Section VII.
- B. NGM Rail, including its staff and representatives, shall provide to OEA and the Contractor any requested supportive expertise, resources, data, and technical capabilities necessary to undertake the environmental analysis, subject to the right of NGM Rail to advise OEA of any request received from OEA of the Contractor that NGM Rail believes either is not germane to matters appropriately reviewed in the environmental review process, is contrary to applicable statutes and regulations, would impose an extraordinary burden on NGM Rail, or is subject to the right of NGM Rail to maintain confidentiality as to proprietary, privileged, or other information which is not otherwise subject to disclosure. If NGM Rail so advises OEA, OEA shall determine whether the request is appropriate and shall so advise NGM Rail and the Contractor of its determination. OEA shall, to the extent possible, maintain the confidentiality of any information if so requested by NGM Rail.
- C. NGM Rail shall cooperate fully with OEA in organizing and participating in any public workshops, hearings, and meetings, as OEA determines are necessary to (1) foster public understanding and/or participation in the environmental review process, and (2) assess potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures related to the notice.

- D. With respect to all reports, analyses, and documents, including drafts, supplements, and final copies of the environmental documents, NGM Rail shall be responsible for the Contractor's administrative and clerical costs, as well as the costs of graphics, maps, layouts, mailing, and printing, as those costs are defined by a contract to be negotiated and executed by NGM Rail and the Contractor. NGM Rail shall, however, have the option of directing that the printing of the environmental documentation be performed by a private entity, rather than OEA. NGM Rail shall be solely responsible for the cost of preparing and providing to OEA the appropriate number of copies of all required environmental documentation.
- E. NGM Rail shall provide complete, accurate, relevant, and timely responses to all reasonable requests for information pertaining to the notice to the Board, the Operating Plan, and the environmental aspects and effects of the proposed rail construction and operation.

VI. Board/OEA Responsibilities

- A. The Board is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of NEPA and other applicable environmental statutes and regulations by preparing appropriate environmental documentation.
- B. OEA shall:
 - (1) Direct, review, and approve all phases of preparing all required environmental documentation, including the work of the Contractor, using OEA's best efforts to ensure that the work is reasonably necessary to conduct the environmental review process regarding the proceeding and the work is within the scope of NEPA requirements. For example, OEA shall ensure that the Contractor considers existing data and environmental analyses available from NGM Rail, OEA, and other sources, and that the Contractor does not duplicate work already done, unless OEA determines that the existing data are not adequate for use in preparing the environmental documentation;
 - (2) Designate appropriate staff to review and approve all work as it is developed and completed;

- (3) Ensure that its representatives attend meetings, as needed, with federal, state, regional, and local agencies, and other interested parties, as well as any public hearings or meetings, to exchange information, explain the project and related environmental concerns and impacts, obtain technical input, and receive comments in preparing all required environmental documentation; and
 - (4) Coordinate, with the Contractor's assistance, the exchange of information among any planning, design, or construction engineers or technical staff employed by NGM Rail and Contractor.
- C. OEA will periodically review the work of the Contractor to ensure that the Board's responsibilities under NEPA and related environmental laws and regulations are being satisfied. As each portion of any draft or final document is completed, OEA staff shall review and approve that portion and those tasks completed, and/or direct further work with regard to that portion or task.
- D. OEA will monitor the Contractor to ensure that the Contractor is making adequate progress toward meeting specific time frames established in the Work Plan described in Section VII. If OEA determines these commitments are not being met, it will notify NGM Rail of its findings. It will be the responsibility of OEA to recommend any necessary corrective action to be taken under this MOU.
- E. In all instances involving questions concerning the content or relevance of any material (including all data, analyses, charts, and conclusions) prepared by the Contractor, OEA shall make the final determination on including, deleting, or revising any such material in the environmental documents.
- F. To coordinate the preparation of all required environmental documentation, and to verify notice-related data, OEA may hold joint meetings with NGM Rail and Contractor. As necessary, OEA may exclude NGM Rail from participation. OEA may also consult directly with appropriate federal, state, and local officials, and other interested parties.
- G. OEA, with the assistance of the Contractor, will be responsible for organizing and conducting any public workshops or meetings that may be necessary in preparing environmental documents during the environmental review process.
- H. OEA, with the assistance of the Contractor, will receive all relevant comments submitted during the environmental review process and comment period. At the

close of any public review and comment period, OEA, in consultation with the Contractor, shall identify the issues and comments that will require a response from the Board. OEA may direct these comments to NGM Rail and to the Contractor, as appropriate, to be included in the environmental document. OEA may modify these responses as appropriate.

- I. OEA, with the assistance of the Contractor, shall prepare final recommendations for the Board.
- J. OEA shall retain responsibility for deciding the environmentally preferable alternative, and any mitigation measures to be included in the final environmental document.

VII. Work Plan

- A. The Contractor, in consultation with OEA and NGM Rail, shall submit a draft Work Plan to OEA for preparing the required environmental documentation within 10 business days after all parties have signed this MOU. The draft Work Plan shall contain at least the following elements:
 - (1) A description of all work to be performed (including preparing and sending any consultation letters; participating in public and agency meetings; outlining and drafting environmental documents; reviewing, analyzing, and summarizing public comments, conducting analyses, etc.);
 - (2) The projected schedule for completing the various tasks described;
 - (3) Identification of the Contractor's staff members who will be responsible for preparing, analyzing, and reviewing the work; and
 - (4) An outline of the environmental analysis.
- B. Following receipt of the draft Work Plan, OEA, in consultation with the Contractor and NGM Rail, shall finalize the Work Plan in a timely manner.
- C. After consultation with the Contractor and NGM Rail, OEA may amend the Work Plan from time to time as the environmental review of the notice may necessitate. The parties hereto shall consult at least once every two weeks to confirm that the work is being performed in the most efficient and cost-effective manner and to

consider possible measures to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the work.

VIII. Disputes

Disputes between the parties may arise regarding the environmental review process, including approach, methods, analysis, conclusions, and performance of the obligations of the parties to this MOU. The parties agree to seek resolution of disputes among the individuals or parties directly involved. In addition, the parties may seek independent facilitation or mediation to assist in resolving disputes if resolution is not achieved.

IX. Nonperformance and Termination

- A. NGM Rail or the Contractor shall notify OEA of any concerns either party might have with respect to the other party's performance under the contract between the NGM Rail and the Contractor or this MOU. All parties will attempt to resolve, in good faith, any disputes or disagreements.
- B. If OEA determines that either the Contractor or NGM Rail is not adequately performing its responsibilities and duties in accordance with this MOU, OEA will discuss its concerns with the Contractor and NGM Rail. If OEA's concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved, OEA will notify NGM Rail that OEA is removing the Contractor for cause, or direct NGM Rail to comply with the MOU. Upon removal of the Contractor, OEA shall endeavor to replace the Contractor with another qualified contractor as soon as practicable.
- C. Both NGM Rail and the Contractor shall immediately notify OEA of any attempt by either party to modify or terminate the contract between NGM Rail and the Contractor. Termination of the contract shall be subject to OEA's prior approval, after consultation with NGM Rail and the Contractor. Upon approving termination of the contract, OEA shall endeavor to replace the Contractor with another qualified contractor as soon as practicable. Notwithstanding the foregoing, NGM Rail may terminate the contract without OEA's approval if it withdraws its request for authority from the Board.

X. Modification

This MOU may be modified only by written amendment executed by OEA, NGM Rail, and the Contractor.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AMONG SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
BOARD, NEVADA GOLD RAIL LLC, and VANASSE HANGEN BRUSTLIN, INC.

Signature page 1 of 3

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

(Signature)

By: Danielle Gosselin

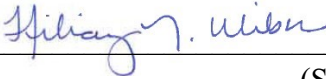
Title: Director

Date: 1/5/26

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AMONG SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
BOARD, NEVADA GOLD RAIL LLC, and VANASSE HANGEN BRUSTLIN, INC.

Signature page 2 of 3

NEVADA GOLD RAIL LLC



(Signature)

By: Hiliary N. Wilson

Title: Secretary

Date: December 23, 2025

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AMONG SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
BOARD, NEVADA GOLD RAIL, LLC, and VANASSE HANGEN BRUSTLIN, INC

Signature page 3 of 3

VANASSE HANGEN BRUSTLIN, INC.

Alan Summerville

(Signature)

By: Alan Summerville

Title: Vice President, NEPA Practice Leader

Date: December 31, 2025

From: [Assenza, Adam](#)
To: [Alan Summerville](#); [Runyan, Joshua](#)
Cc: [Gosselin, Danielle](#)
Subject: RE: [External] RE: NVG Rail 3PC MOU for signature
Date: Monday, January 5, 2026 10:47:47 AM
Attachments: [3PC MOU STB-NGM-VHB_DG Signed.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)

Joshua and Alan,

Please find attached the executed 3rd Party Contractor MOU for the proposed NVG Rail project.

Thank you,



Adam Assenza

Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
O: 202-245-0301

From: Alan Summerville <asummerville@vhb.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 31, 2025 5:13 PM
To: Assenza, Adam <Adam.Assenza@stb.gov>
Cc: Gosselin, Danielle <Danielle.Gosselin@stb.gov>; Runyan, Joshua <jrunyan@steptoe.com>
Subject: RE: [External] RE: NVG Rail 3PC MOU for signature

Hi Adam and

Attached is the version with VHB's signature.

Happy New Year!

Alan

Alan Summerville

Vice President, NEPA Practice Leader

P [202.739.9521](tel:202.739.9521) | M [703.622.3019](tel:703.622.3019)

www.vhb.com

From: Assenza, Adam <Adam.Assenza@stb.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 6:01 PM

To: Runyan, Joshua <jrunyan@steptoe.com>; Alan Summerville <asummerville@vhb.com>

Cc: danielle.gosselin@stb.gov

Subject: [External] RE: NVG Rail 3PC MOU for signature

Hi Joshua,

Excellent. Once VHB's signature is received, I'll forward the MOU to Danielle for final signature and execution. That way, we'll be ready to hit the ground running when we receive the report mid-January.

Regards, and have a safe holiday season,



Adam Assenza

Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
O: 202-245-0301

From: Runyan, Joshua <jrunyan@steptoe.com>

Sent: Monday, December 29, 2025 11:28 AM

To: Assenza, Adam <Adam.Assenza@stb.gov>; Alan Summerville <asummerville@vhb.com>

Cc: Gosselin, Danielle <Danielle.Gosselin@stb.gov>

Subject: RE: NVG Rail 3PC MOU for signature

Adam – NGM has signed the attached MOU. Aiming to have the updated alignment report to you the week of January 12.

From: Assenza, Adam <Adam.Assenza@stb.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, December 23, 2025 2:42 PM

To: Runyan, Joshua <jrunyan@steptoe.com>; Alan Summerville <asummerville@vhb.com>

Cc: Gosselin, Danielle <Danielle.Gosselin@stb.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] NVG Rail 3PC MOU for signature

Hello Joshua,

Please find attached the MOU between OEA, NGM Rail, and VHB. After NGM Rail signs, then VHB, then OEA, we can begin working on the environmental review with VHB's

support. Also, please let me know when OEA can expect to receive the alignments report discussed in our last Teams call.

Thank you,
Adam



Adam Assenza

Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
O: 202-245-0301
C: 202-235-4658

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