

From: [Blodgett, Kenneth](#)
To: julianne.polanco@parks.ca.gov; calshpo.ohp@parks.ca.gov
Cc: [Messinger, Michelle@Parks](#)
Subject: AB 874 (Sub-No. 1X) - Sierra Northern Railway abandonment in Yolo County, SHPO Ref # STB_2019_1125_001
Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2020 12:17:00 PM
Attachments: [Draft EA- Sierra Northern.pdf](#)
[Yolo filing.pdf](#)

Dear Ms. Polanco,

Per my conversation with Michelle Messenger last week, please find the attached Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) which was served today for a 30 day public review and comment period. Your office should have received an electronic copy. In an abundance of caution, I thought it best to also send a copy to you directly. Surface Transportation Board (Board) decisions are available on the Board's website. Due to the pandemic, the Board's mailroom will not be providing paper copies of decisions or other materials until further notice.

As you are probably aware, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) are in the process of implementing a flood control improvement project that would require removal of 0.70 mile of rail line (the Line) from on top of the Sacramento weir (the weir) to allow the weir to be widened so that pressure on the levees can be reduced by increasing water flow through the weir and the adjoining bypass. SAFCA would like to acquire the property on which the Line is located. USACE and SAFCA have asked Sierra Northern Railway (Sierra) to abandon the Line and convey Sierra's interest in the Line to SAFCA. Sierra has agreed, subject to obtaining the required STB abandonment authority. Federal funding has been obtained to carry out the flood control project, and USACE and SAFCA would like to begin work as soon as possible. Sierra has asked that the Board expedite its decision.

The Board's environmental review for rail line abandonments is limited to impacts related to diversion of rail traffic and salvage activities. As discussed in the Historic Review section of the attached Draft EA, USACE, SAFCA, and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board cooperated in preparing an EIS/EIR that evaluated the potential environmental impacts of SAFCA's flood control improvement project. On behalf of SAFCA, GEI Consultants, Inc. (GEI) had a historian, who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards, inventory and evaluate the Line for eligibility to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) in 2019. GEI's inventory and evaluation found that the Line lacks integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to its period of historic significance. In a memorandum dated September 5, 2019 (Exhibit L of Sierra's Historic Report), GEI concluded that the evaluated railroad segment does not appear to meet NRHP or CRHR criteria and would not be eligible for listing in the NRHP or CRHR. In the Draft EA, the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) agrees with GEI's finding that the Line does not appear to be a historic property for purposes of Section 106 of the NHPA and is not a historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act. OEA has determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect, or APE) listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

OEA requests SHPO concurrence on the Board's no eligibility finding and its determination of

no effect to historic properties. Your concurrence will hopefully allow the Board to expedite a decision granting abandonment authority, which in turn will allow the city of Sacramento to more expeditiously implement its flood control project. In addition to the Draft EA, I have attached Sierra's March 19, 2020 filing with the Board seeking abandonment of the Line. The GEI memo discussed is Exhibit L of Sierra's Historic Report (page 254), which is at the very end of that filing.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thanks.

Ken Blodgett
202-245-0305