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Mayor
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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

July 24, 2014

RE: STB Finance Docket No. 35802, Northwest Tennessee Regional Port Authority—Rail Construction and Operation—in Lake County, Tennessee:
Request for Information and Comments on Proposed 5.5 Mile Rail Line to serve the Port of Cates Landing

The Northwest Tennessee Regional Port Authority (NWTRPA or Port Authority) is interested in constructing a new rail line and has filed a petition before the Surface Transportation Board (Board). The Board is an independent agency within the United States Department of Transportation that has jurisdiction over railroad construction and operations. As part of its licensing process, the Board will conduct an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We are writing to you to ask you for any information you may have on the Port Authority's proposed new rail line and to request your comments so that we may begin our environmental review process.

Pursuant to NEPA and the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105, the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) will prepare an environmental document that evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed rail construction project and the reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposal. OEA is beginning the process of gathering information on the project area and project-related issues and concerns. Information collected will assist us in preparing the appropriate NEPA document for the proposed project.

Description of the Proposed Rail Project

NWTRPA is a political subdivision that has been established by the counties of Dyer, Lake, and Obion in northwest Tennessee for the purpose of owning, constructing, and operating a regional river port facility in Lake County, Tennessee. On June 27, 2014, NWTRPA filed a petition with the Board, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502, for authority to construct approximately 5.5 miles of new railroad line that would connect an existing rail line near Tiptonville, Tennessee to the site of a newly constructed port facility on the Mississippi River at Cates Landing (see the attached map which shows the location of the proposed rail line as proposed by NWTRPA). If the proposed rail line is constructed, NWTRPA intends to enter into a contract with an existing short line railroad to provide common carrier service to customers located at the port and at an adjacent

industrial park currently under development in conjunction with the port.

The proposed rail line would begin at an intersection with the existing Tennken Railroad near Tiptonville, Tennessee and would extend to the northwest in the direction of the port. Approximately three miles from the connection with the existing railroad, the proposed rail line would bisect the proposed Lake County Industrial Park. Approximately 2.5 miles northwest of the Industrial Park, the line would enter the campus of the Port of Cates Landing and would parallel the port's slack water harbor to the main dock facility. The rail right-of-way would primarily cross open farm land and could cross as many as two public roads.

The proposed rail line would be used to transport shipments of agricultural products, as well as industrial and energy commodities and products. Once the port facility and the adjacent industrial park are fully developed, NWTRPA anticipates that the rail line would also transport raw materials for industrial products, finished manufactured goods, agricultural commodities and products, and special cargoes. NWTRPA predicts that rail traffic on the line would initially consist of fewer than 1,000 carloads annually, but would eventually increase to more than 1,000 carloads annually as the port facility and industrial park becomes fully developed.

Agency Consultation

At this time, I request your preliminary comments regarding the proposed rail project. Any information you provide relating to the following issues will assist OEA in determining what environmental issues should be addressed in its environmental review:

- Safety
- Local land use
- Existing transportation systems
- Air emissions and ambient air quality
- Energy use
- Water quality and wetlands
- Ambient noise levels
- Historic sites, archaeological sites, or cultural resources
- Socioeconomics (population, employment, growth, and development)
- Wildlife, vegetation, and fisheries
- Soils and geology

Information on additional issues or concerns that you consider appropriate would also be appreciated. Please respond by September 1, 2014 so that we can incorporate your response into the environmental review process, as appropriate, and schedule any meetings, site visits, surveys, and conduct any necessary follow-up activities. Please submit comments and responses to EnSafe, Inc., OEA's independent third-party contractor in this case, at the following address:

EnSafe, Inc.
Attn: Brian Yates
5724 Summer Trees Drive
Memphis, Tennessee 38134

I appreciate your assistance on this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Josh Wayland of my staff at (202) 245-0330 or Brian Yates of EnSafe at (901) 372-7962. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Rutson" clearly distinguishable.

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis