



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

EO-3229

January 28, 2020

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Phillip Burton Federal Building
P.O. Box 36023
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Docket No. FD 36312, Oakland Global Rail Enterprise – Authority to Operate a Rail Line in Oakland, Cal.

To Whom It May Concern:

Oakland Global Rail Enterprise (OGRE) intends to request authority from the Surface Transportation Board (Board) to operate over sections of existing and rehabilitated railroad tracks in Oakland, California. The Board is an independent federal agency that has jurisdiction over railroad construction and operations. As part of its licensing process, the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) will conduct an environmental review of the proposed rail operations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) and related environmental laws.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the proposed project and to (1) request information from your agency on the resources under your jurisdiction that could be affected by the proposed project, (2) solicit comments on potential environmental issues and concerns that may be associated with the proposed project, and (3) identify permits and approvals that may be required of OGRE.

Project Background

OGRE's proposed rail operations would occur within existing rail line right-of-way at and near the former Oakland Army Base (OAB). OAB was decommissioned in 1999 as part of the United States Department of Defense's base realignment and closure program, and since decommissioning, much of the former OAB lands have been conveyed to the City of Oakland (City) and the Port of Oakland (Port) for redevelopment purposes. The right-of-way over which OGRE would operate is located south of the Bay Bridge toll plaza, west of Interstate 880, north of 7th Street, and east of Maritime Street (see attached figure). OGRE owns less than 10 percent of the right-of-way over which it would operate; the balance is owned or controlled by the Port, the City, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP), and BNSF Railway Company. Collectively, OGRE would operate over approximately 96,000 feet of track.

OGRE states that freight rail is a critical component of the OAB redevelopment plans. Accordingly, OGRE's proposed rail operations would reconnect the OAB rail network, including lands controlled by both the Port and the City, to the UP main line. OGRE's operations would also be integrated with the Port's newly developed Outer Harbor Intermodal Terminal rail yard that can accommodate intermodal, neo-bulk and bulk commodities. As an alternative to moving freight by truck, OGRE states that the proposed rail operations would also reduce the burden of truck movements on the surrounding communities and existing infrastructure.

OGRE states that the bulk commodities that could be transported as part of the proposed project include proteins, resins, iron ore, copper concentrate, coal, soda ash, and agricultural products. At full operational capacity, OGRE anticipates that up to three trains could move per day with each train being 6,400 feet long and broken into six 3,200-foot-long trains. Trains would be broken down and reassembled in the Port's railyard, which is located parallel to the UP railyard/Interstate 880 corridor at the southeastern boundary of the former OAB.

Environmental Review Process

Pursuant to NEPA and the Board's environmental rules (49 C.F.R. Part 1105), OEA will prepare an environmental document, either an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment, that evaluates the potential environmental effects of the proposed 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, agency responses to this consultation letter, and a forthcoming site visit by OEA staff, will inform our decision regarding the appropriate NEPA document to prepare for the proposed project.

Once that decision is made, OEA will prepare the draft environmental document and issue it for public review and comment as required by NEPA and the Board's environmental rules. After the environmental review process is complete, the Board will then decide whether to approve, approve with conditions (which could include conditions designed to mitigate potential impacts on the environment), or deny OGRE's request for a license to operate the rail lines described above.

Request for Comments

Your participation in agency consultation will assist us in gathering information needed to assess the potential environmental effects, both positive and negative, that may be associated with the proposed project. In conducting the environmental review required by NEPA, OEA is consulting with, and soliciting comments from, agencies and organizations that may have specific knowledge of potential environmental issues and impacts that may be associated with the proposed project. Your comments will be most helpful to us if they focus on specific environmental issues or concerns pertaining to your jurisdiction. OEA also welcomes information on any additional issues or concerns that you consider appropriate.

OEA requests your response by February 28, 2020 so that we may be able to schedule meetings, site visits, and surveys, conduct necessary follow-up activities, and incorporate your response into the scope of study, as appropriate. OEA also encourages agencies to submit their comments electronically through the Board's website at <https://www.stb.gov/>. From the Board's home page, select "File an Environmental Comment" under "Need Assistance?" Brief comments can be typed in the comment field, and lengthier comments can be attached as Word, Adobe Acrobat or other file formats.

Alternatively, comments may be mailed to OEA's project manager at:

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

If you have any questions, please contact Dave Navecky of my staff at 202-245-0294 or by email at David.Navecky@stb.gov. We appreciate your assistance and look forward to your participation in the Board's environmental review process for the proposed project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson".

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis

Enclosures
cc: