



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

June 14, 2019

Jaime Loichinger, Assistant Director
Sarah Stokely, Program Analyst
Federal Permitting, Licensing and Assistance Section
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
401 F Street NW, Suite 308
Washington DC 20001-2637

**Re: STB Docket No. FD 34284—Southwest Gulf Railroad Company—
Construction and Operation Exemption—In Medina County, Texas; project
update on artifact finds on private lands; and submittal of historic American
building survey-like level II documentation, library exhibits, and semi-
annual status reports**

Dear Ms. Loichinger and Ms. Stokely:

Pursuant to the terms of the Amended Programmatic Agreement (PA) (approved August 12, 2016) and the Resolution Plan (approved September 7, 2017) in the above referenced rail line construction project, the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) is providing you with this update. Our last project update occurred on July 20, 2018.

This letter provides a summary of Southwest Gulf Railroad's (SGR) implementation of the mitigation required under the Resolution Plan as well as the status of collected artifacts and includes (1) the historic American building survey-like (HABS-like) level II documentation and library exhibit/educational materials for properties that are eligible for listing in National Register of Historic Places (National Register); and (2) SGR's semi-annual status reports from October 2018 and May 2019 as required by the PA.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION PLAN MITIGATION

As background, the *Resolution Plan to Resolve Adverse Effects to Historic Properties for the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company (SGR) Construction and Operation of Proposed Single-Track Railroad project in Medina County Texas (STB Finance Docket No. 34284)* (Resolution Plan), was completed in August 2017. Four archaeological sites and seven historic

properties were determined to be potentially adversely affected by the proposed rail line construction project and the Resolution Plan requires mitigation for these effects.

Archaeological Resources –

Phase II testing of archaeological sites 41ME260, 41ME261, and 41ME264 concluded that all three sites are not eligible for inclusion in the National Register. These results are presented in the *Phase II Testing of Sites 41ME260, 41ME261, and 41ME264 for the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company Construction and Operation of the Proposed Single-Track Railroad* (Phase II Report). In August 2018, the Texas Historical Commission (THC), a signatory to the PA, provided written concurrence of this determination and accepted the Phase II Report.

Site 41ME262 was only partially tested for National Register eligibility due to problems associated with obtaining full site access. The tested segment, located in the rail corridor, was determined not eligible and the untested segment, parcel R3311, was assumed eligible pending further testing. SGR avoided parcel R3311 during rail line construction as it does not own this property. Accordingly, no further action is needed here.

Architectural Resources –

For the adversely affected properties in the Upper Quihi Rural Historic District (UQRHD), Architectural Historians Kristen Morgan and Jessica Forbes prepared a temporary exhibit of architectural resources HDR-AR-02, HDR-AR-03, HDR-AR-04, HDR-AR-05, HDR-AR-06, HDR-AR-10, and HDR-AR-11. The exhibit panel and hard copies of a corresponding exhibit guide were delivered to the Hondo Public Library for display in December 2018. No further action is needed here.

HABS-like Level II documentation was prepared for architectural resources HDR-AR-02, HDR-AR-04, HDR-AR-05, and HDR-AR-06. This documentation consists of elevation drawings, photographs and a written history with site descriptions. Quimby McCoy Preservation Architecture, LLC completed the elevation drawings in March 2018. Photographer Paul Chaplo completed the large-format photographs in May 2018. The written history with site descriptions is included in the 2016 survey report entitled *Southwest Gulf Railroad Company Construction and Operation of the Proposed Single-Track Railroad* (Fullerton et al). These documents were delivered to the THC in November 2018 and the Hondo Public Library in December 2018. In addition, archival quality copies of the HABS-like documentation were delivered to SGR and THC in early 2019. No further action is needed here.

For other mitigation, Sauls Seismic, LLC continues to conduct vibration monitoring of resources HDR-AR-02 and HDR-AR06. The structural integrity of resource HDR-AR-06 was deemed unsound and beyond preservation in October 2017 and a preservation plan cannot be developed for this resource. Vegetative buffer planting for resources HDR-AR-02, HDR-AR-04,

HDR-AR-10 and HDR-AR-11 was completed in November 2018. No further action is needed here.

STATUS OF COLLECTED ARTIFACTS

Stipulation IX of the PA directs OEA to encourage private landowners to curate collections found on their properties at an appropriate facility. OEA sent inquiry letters to the five affected landowners in September 2018. Three landowners responded within the 30-day timeframe in favor of retaining their artifacts and OEA assumed the same for the two landowners that did not respond. SGR returned these artifacts via certified delivery in December 2018. SGR also confirmed that it did not find any artifacts on land that it owned at the time of discovery. No further action is needed here.

The mitigation measures set forth in the Resolution Plan have been completed. SGR will continue to provide semi-annual status reports in accordance with the terms of the PA until construction has been completed and the PA has been terminated. OEA is sending this letter, with attachments, to the consulting parties and has made this information available to the public on the Board's web site at www.stb.gov as "incoming" or "outgoing" environmental correspondence under FD 34284. If you have additional questions, please contact me or Diana Wood of my staff by telephone at 202-245-0302 or by email at diana.wood@stb.gov.

Sincerely,

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

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis

Attachments (3)

cc: Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer, THC
Justin Kockritz, THC
Casey Hanson, THC
Bill Martin, THC
David Coburn, SGR Counsel
Cynthia Taub, SGR Counsel
Consulting Parties

Note to file -

The attachments are on the Board's web site at www.stb.gov as "incoming" or "outgoing" environmental correspondence under FD 34284 as the following:

EI-26375

EI-26376

EI-26377

EI-26378

EI-26379

EI-26380

EI-26381

EI-26369

EI-26477

EO-3024