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**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

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JUN 18 2015

Ref: 8EPR-N

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Director, Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Six County Association of Governments Proposed Rail Line between Levan and Salina, Utah; CEQ #20150153

Dear Ms. Rutson:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 has reviewed the Final EIS for the Six County Association of Governments' (SCAOG's) proposed rail line between Levan and Salina, Utah, that was prepared by the Surface Transportation Board (Board), Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA). We have completed a review pursuant to our responsibilities and authority under Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Section 309 of the Clean Air Act directs the EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts of any major federal agency action.

Project Background

The SCAOG's proposed action involves constructing and operating approximately 45 miles of new rail line to transport bulk commodities and would primarily serve the coal-mining operation of Bowie Resources. The proposed rail line would replace trucking that is currently used to haul coal from the mine over state and local roads to destinations outside the project area. In June 2007, a Draft EIS was issued by the OEA in cooperation with Bureau of Land Management (BLM). After issuance of the Draft EIS, the OEA received comments from several agencies raising concerns about the project's impacts on wetlands. Subsequently, the SCAOG conducted an investigation and used the information gathered to develop three new modified alternatives.

The Supplemental Draft EIS examined five build alternatives. The BLM and the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) were cooperating agencies in the development of the Supplemental Draft and Final EIS. The OEA has identified Alternative B3/B2 as its Environmentally Preferred Alternate for the proposed new rail line. The Final EIS also sets forth OEA's recommended measures for mitigating potential environmental impacts and recommends the Board impose these measures when it grants final approval of the project.

EPA Review

It is clear the OEA has developed mitigation measures to ensure concerns raised by the EPA and other agencies are addressed so as to: minimize impacts to migratory birds during breeding, nesting and

roosting seasons; protect the Redman Wildlife Management Area; identify sensitive species and determine how to minimize impacts; and avoid and mitigate impacts to wetland areas and the special habitat they provide. We are pleased to see that the OEA has added new mitigation measures concerning maintaining the natural water and drainage patterns, and hydrologic conductivity throughout floodplains and wetlands. This is an important mitigation measure for the project, and specifically for the impacted playa wetland that provides a unique habitat for specialized plants and ecosystems.

Since most of the mitigation measures provided in the Final EIS are performance based and the FEIS does not provide detail on how these measures will be carried out, it is important that the Section 404 permit stipulate the specific mitigation measures. We support the Environmentally Preferred Alternative selected in the Final EIS and encourage the Board to adopt this alternative (B3/B2) and the recommended conditions and mitigation measures in their decision for this rail line project.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (303) 312-6704. You may also contact Lisa Lloyd, NEPA lead reviewer, at (303) 312-6537 or by email at lloyd.lisa@epa.gov.

Sincerely,


for Philip S. Strobel
Acting Director, NEPA Compliance and Review Program
Office of Ecosystems Protection and Remediation

cc: USACE Bountiful Office
Phillis Johnson-Ball, OEA