

222 County Road 363
Hondo, Texas 78861
January 8, 2005

EI-1345

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington, D.C. 20423

Attention: Rini Ghosh
STB Docket No. FD 34284

received
1/11/05

Dear Ms. Ghosh:

As a homeowner and landowner in the Quihi area, I have many serious concerns about the proposed Vulcan quarry in our area and the proposed railroad to the quarry.

The Draft Environmental Impact Study report contained a number of statements that were not true --- and also downplayed every potential problem in Vulcan's favor. There were a number of conflicting statements. While the DEIS reported that a quarry and railroad would pose little or no impact to our area, those of us who live here know differently.

First of all, I question how land can be condemned by a private company for their own use. Some of the land the proposed railroad would cross is Heritage Land --- land that has belonged to a family for 100 years or more. Many of the landowners in the Quihi area have signed legal covenants stating that their land is not to be used for a railroad. Will these legal covenants be ignored if Vulcan condemns land for their own use?

Second, if a railroad is built, the number of gravel trucks on our farm-to-market road will increase tremendously. Many gravel trucks already travel FM 2676. Because of their weight and speed they are a danger to others. Four of our close neighbors --- a family --- father, mother, and two children--- were killed just a few years ago on FM 2676 by a gravel truck. The potential for more tragic accidents increases greatly with more truck traffic on country roads.

If a railroad is built without grade separation crossings, emergency vehicles will be delayed. Ambulances, law enforcement officers, and firefighters will be stopped if trains cross at grade level. Out here in a rural area alternative routes are simply not possible. Four or five minute delays can mean lives and/or homes lost.

During times of prolonged heavy rainfall, flooding becomes a serious problem in our area. Many homes are isolated by flooding. The proposed railroad crosses the floodplain in many places. If a railroad is built the topography of the land will be altered. More serious flooding is a definite concern.

Damage to water wells at homes in our area is another concern. Quarry blasting could damage our wells. Also, a quarry would use huge amounts of Edwards Aquifer water. Homeowners may be forced to deepen wells if Vulcan uses massive amounts of water. The Edwards water is already needed by our town and irrigated farms. We cannot understand using it for the profit of an Alabama corporation (Vulcan).

Finally, the quarry and the railroad are connected actions. A broader study than the DEIS is needed. A study that is more accurate in every detail ---a study that is not obviously slanted in favor of Vulcan ---a study that seriously and fairly addresses the concerns of residents of the Quihi area.

Katherine Baxter

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222 County Road 363
Hondo, Texas 78861

cc: Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison
Sen. John Cornyn
Rep. Henry Bonilla
State Sen. Frank Madla