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January 6, 2005

Elizabeth Wood
671 County Road 252
Hondo, Texas 78861

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington, D.C. 20423
Attn: Rini Ghosh
STB Docket No. FD 34284



Dear Sirs:

This letter is to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) concerning the proposed Southwest Gulf Railroad line from Vulcan's proposed limestone quarry north of Quihi, Texas to Dunlay, Texas. The information in the DEIS was insufficient for determining the impact of the rail line on the area. The proposed railway will have great and long-lasting impact on my family, our neighbors, our community, and our local environment. Of most concern is increased flooding, traffic, noise, dust, and vibration.

All of the proposed rail line routes cross several creeks and floodplains. After only a few days' worth of rain, current flooding to these areas already interrupt travel to and from employment for myself, my husband and most other residents in Quihi. To me personally, this means reduced income for my family because when I don't work, I don't get paid. Any increase in flooding, as a railroad is certain to cause, will compound this problem and threaten our livelihood.

Another major issue is the obstruction of county and farm roads during train function and malfunction. In more urban areas, where alternate roads are available, a railroad would still be a loud, unpleasant eyesore. But, the traffic issue would probably be less disruptive than it will be to our community. In our beautiful rural area, the many current residents (and any future residents of subdivisions under development) rely on their one county road to access Farm Road 2676. And this farm road is the only exit for nearly everyone in the Quihi area. Normal train function will result in daily delays and risk of collisions as high-speed commuting vehicles approach passing trains, not to mention the potential for prolonged interruption with train malfunction. An even more damaging consequence will be in the event of a passing train delaying needed emergency vehicles, i.e. EMS or fire department. Within the last year, my own family experienced an out-of-control brush fire. If the volunteer fire personnel had been hindered, tragedy could have occurred.

The creation of noise, dust and vibration will threaten our multiple local historic sites and will destroy the peaceful environment for our families and wildlife. My husband and I chose to purchase land and build a home in this most serene and remote area for precisely the reason of raising our two preschool children where the only sounds are birds singing

and the wind blowing through the cedars. We value our seclusion and greatly resent being deprived of this most precious asset.

As troubling as I am sure you find these consequences to be, they are mere inconveniences compared to the one most severe issue at stake. Namely, this will be the appalling violation of so many American citizens' property rights if Vulcan and SGR use the excuse of "eminent domain" to seize and condemn land and homes. The only reason for the railroad to exist is the proposed quarry. And as only the few people who are contributing to the actual quarry site stand to benefit from this project, it seems evident that the welfare of the majority—who don't want a railroad on their land—is in danger of being trampled for the sake of the few who will receive a large financial boost from this project.

Being federal employees, the commissioners of the Surface Transportation Board are employees of the United States taxpayers and are responsible to protect the rights of United States citizens, including property rights. As a citizen and taxpayer, I call upon you to do the right thing and submit to the will of the people of Quihi and not to the will of those who wish to trade their neighbors' rights to fatten their own bank accounts. Protect our community and our environment from the threat of this looming and lasting scar that will severely alter our present tranquility and will devastate our piece of Americana.

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Wood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "E" and "W".

Elizabeth Wood
Landowner and Quihi resident