

HEI-25843

Ms. Diana Wood
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

14 March 2017

Re: Surface Transportation Board, Southwest Gulf Railroad, FD 34284

We are honored by our opportunity to express our views in support and to back and preserve the heritage area of Quihi. It is our obligation and duty to write this letter to reply to HDR's draft of the SGR company construction of a proposed single-track railroad in Medina County to a large quarry in upper Quihi. We are members of MCEAA and consultants.

Currently we reside at CR 354, Hondo, TX, only some ½ mile south of the rail loading loop and the current rail alignment and direct effects ADE boundary. My home and property is within the upper Quihi Historic district. Our farm at the above location has been awarded a certificate by the state of Texas for continuous ownership and operation as a family since 1881. Joyce's brother has a similar award on his adjoining property. Joyce's family records confirmed ancestors arrived in Texas in 1852 and 1856 and then settled in Quihi area.

It is difficult for local area residents to understand and differentiate the many kinds of effects that this SGR can cause. We must acknowledge that this railroad proposal was started in 1999-2000. Local residents have made steps to avoid rail lines on their property by adding covenants in 2001 for protection.

Local residents do know that a railroad plus a Martin Marietta quarry was installed in this county and in operation in about five years with little or no major objection; while this SGR is still under study for eighteen years with alterations, changes, and unknowns.

There are several findings in the HDR study that the railroad would destroy much of the aesthetic value of upper Quihi area and resulting unacceptable for national historic site registration. The 18 years plus waiting period on the planning and construction has had adverse effects. Many structures were neglected and other plans and dreams were cancelled on this long wait. Sudden distress sales and lost value of property has prevailed. Some local residents felt rough and aggressive treatment during this wait.

Inherent joys such as upper Quihi area are often lost. Good stewardship to our cultural heritage is paramount. The only action to save this historical district is for the rail line to avoid it or abandon the project. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the HDR draft.

cc: Texas Historical Commission
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cc: John M. Fowler, Exec. Director, ACHP
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