

TO: Members of the Surface Transportation Board
of the U. S. Department of Transportation
Section of Environmental Analysis

Finance Docket No. 34284
Southwest Gulf Railroad Company
Construction and Operation Exemption
Medina County, Texas

December 14, 2005

I have followed the efforts made by Vulcan Mining and Materials Company to develop a quarry near the community of Quihi in Medina County, Texas. To move crushed limestone from the mining site, Southwest Gulf Railroad (SGR) has proposed to build a seven-mile rail line to connect the quarry with the Union Pacific Railroad. I want your board to be aware that I am in favor of the Vulcan project and support construction of a railroad which will operate with a minimum negative effect on the environment and people living within this area. My interest in this project results from family ownership of three parcels of land near the quarry site and proposed rail line. Please consider the reasons for my support stated below.

1. Transportation / Traffic Safety - I trust the SGR will be required to install appropriate warnings, and believe that the Texas Department of Transportation (TexDOT) are experts in planning for complete safety for all persons who travel these routes. Medina County citizens and other travelers are accustomed to warning signals at railroad tracks since 1861 and are capable of observing and heeding such devices which precede railroad crossings. The crossings of SGR should not cause any greater problems than others throughout the United States. To transport the expected amount of material by truck would create many adverse impacts on traffic safety.

2. Water Resources - Flooding and erosion are concerns, but the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and Vulcan engineers will address these possible problems by designing construction plans and policies to prevent significant impact. Historical flooding in identified flood plains could continue even if a quarry or a rail line does not exist there. Water resources are of great importance, so the quarry and SGR will be required to protect groundwaters and the Edwards aquifer by complying with all local and federal guidelines to prevent additional negative effects.

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3. Air Quality - Vulcan has numerous quarry locations in Texas and throughout the United States. They are pledged to use all necessary techniques to prevent excess pollution of the air. I am confident the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will demand that Vulcan and SGR comply with its requirements to reduce air contamination, ensuring a higher level of air quality than that which would result if the materials were moved by trucks.

4. Noise - Railroads have operated in Medina County for over one hundred forty years. Throughout this time homes, businesses, schools, etc. continue to locate quite close to railroads there and across America without significant adverse noise impact on the citizens. People living within one block of railroad tracks in Hondo continue to relax or carry on business during the day and rest well at night. Residents and visitors have become accustomed to noises from trains and do not avoid areas where train whistles are frequently heard.

5. Cultural Resources - Several old homes set along the proposed route for the railroad and are in poor condition. However, historical architects are presently assisting with plans to restore two of them with little concern that passing trains will damage or destroy them. Homes and business sites are located within one to two blocks of Hondo's railroad tracks and have existed for over a hundred years. None of them have been damaged because of impacts from the railway.

6. Vibration - There are many historical buildings over a hundred years old and numerous early wells in Medina County. They have existed within close range of busy railroads with no significant damages due to vibration. Monitoring rail design and construction along the proposed route would minimize vibration impact. Nowhere in Medina County have century-old structures near railroads suffered more severe damages than those buildings which exist many miles from a rail line. There have been no proven cases where rail vibration has resulted in harm or loss of water wells.

7. Land Use - This Board can impose conditions to ensure landowners access to their land and enforce regulations to continue the natural appearance of land bordering the rail line.

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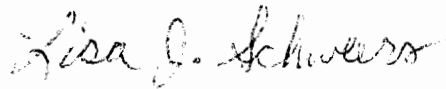
8. Cumulative Impacts - For the reasons stated above, I believe that no significant cumulative impacts would result from a seven-mile rail line operating from a quarry to the Union Pacific rail line in eastern Medina County.

I feel that the proposed quarry and the SGR project should not be viewed as a combined endeavor. It is unjust to predict that additional progress and growth in the Quihi area will never occur and that no other companies will ever benefit from using the proposed rail line.

The Vulcan Company has spent nearly five years conducting environmental studies. They have shown dedication and the ability to work with the Surface Transportation Board while complying with the National Environmental Protection Act. This company is addressing the mitigations listed in the Draft EIS. They and the railroads which presently serve them have proven to be good neighbors to housing developments and their schools which were constructed in San Antonio and Helotes long after Vulcan mining sites were in full production.

I appreciate your efforts during these months of studying the environmental impact of the proposed SGR rail line. Your Draft Environmental Impact Statement demonstrates that you were extremely thorough in addressing any and all concerns of the community involved. You are to be commended for your dedication, and I request that you offer support for the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company's proposed project in Medina County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa J. Schweers".

Lisa J. Schweers

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San Antonio, Texas 78240