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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

EI-18032

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Jan. 15, 2010

Victoria Rutson, Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Ms. Rutson:

I was recently made aware of the RJ Corman Railroad Group's submission to the Surface Transportation Board of "voluntary mitigation measures" it would initiate in pursuit of the proposed rail line reconstruction and resumption of operations between Wallacetown and Gorton in Clearfield and Centre counties, Pa. (Finance Docket No. 35116).

Please be advised that this endeavor remains a fishing expedition for scarce tax dollars to support a nebulous, ever-changing landfill unwanted and unneeded by the people of the Centre and Clearfield counties region in Pennsylvania.

As has been pointed out, the landfill cannot proceed without rail access. And, the landfill is no closer to receiving a permit than it was six years ago. The landfill proposal is a for-profit venture from out-of-area developers, Resource Recovery LLC, with a record of contorting their proposal to whatever may curry favor with state and federal officials and regulators. A brief review of previous contortions – including proposals for an interchange off Interstate 80 and a wastewater treatment plant – bears this out.

I represent Morris and Cooper townships in Clearfield County, which would be affected by this latest proposal. Previously, I have represented Rush Township, which would be home to the landfill. I have supported rail infrastructure projects, including those of RJ Corman, and undoubtedly will do so again. However, this proposal has never been valid or worthy of taxpayer support. As chairman of the Pa. House of Representatives' Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, I have opposed – publically and vociferously -- state funding of this project.

As the RJ Corman letter of Nov. 24, 2009, to the STB bears out, the possibility of eminent domain and condemnation proceedings against landowners to obtain a 66-foot right of way is a distinct possibility. I submit this would spark a nasty and costly battle. As I noted in my April 28, 2008, letter to you, resurrection of this rail line would terminate a highly successful rail-to-trails route that has been operating since the mid-1990s.

I have a love-hate relationship with rails-to-trails. Property owners in the region have been whip-sawed through the process, first losing property/access to railroads, then with the ceding of rights to Rails to Trails, and now, potentially, another round of eminent domain proceedings.

Constituents, who graciously did all they could to see the Rails-to-Trails concept advance, frequently were rebuffed when they sought access to bifurcated property for things like access and utility relocation. Rails-to-Trails played hardball and tried to force punitive fees for such access. It seems only one side was playing the role of being a cooperative neighbor.

It is not difficult to imagine the hard feelings that would ensue should they now face eminent domain or condemnation proceedings for an undefined and highly doubtful project that is opposed by a sizeable proportion of the local populace and many if not most of the local governments.

Time has not improved the worthiness of the proposals submitted by Resource Recovery LLC. It is a ruse of the first degree for anyone to suggest that a resurrection of this rail line is being sought for anything but advancement of an unwanted and unneeded landfill. The last time I checked, Pennsylvania – the largest importer of out-of-state garbage in the nation – had enough landfill capacity to last for more than 10 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Camille "Bud" George
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

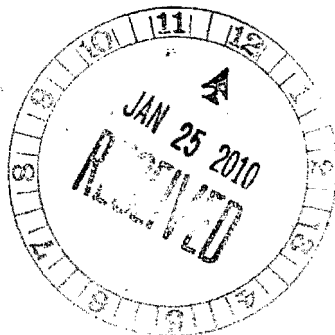
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CC: U.S. Sen. Robert Casey
U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter
Nancy Sutley, Council on Environmental Quality
People Protecting Communities



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