



September 5, 2003



IL-1165

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Environmental Analysis Department
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: STB Finance Docket 34395 and Docket No. AB-858X,
City of Peoria, Illinois, d.b.a Peoria, Peoria Heights and
Western Railroad-Construction Exemption and Abandonment
Exemption—in Peoria County, Illinois

Request for Comments/Consultation on Proposed Construction
of 1,800 ft of Connecting Track and Abandonment of 7.5 miles
of Existing Track in Peoria County, Illinois
Hanson No. 02P2007

Dear Ms. Rutson:

Hanson Professional Services, Inc. (Hanson) is writing to solicit your comments regarding potential environmental impacts of a proposed rail line construction and abandonment in the City of Peoria, Illinois. The proposed rail line construction and abandonment will require the approval of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Surface Transportation Board (Board).

Hanson has been retained by the Peoria, Peoria Heights & Western Railroad (PPHW) to prepare a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) under guidance provided by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA). The PDEA will serve as an administrative draft for SEA, which is responsible for the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA). SEA will independently review the PDEA, and include appropriate recommendations to the Board to mitigate potential environmental impacts. SEA will then issue an EA (based upon the PDEA) for public review and comment. Following the public review and comment period, SEA will prepare a Post-Environmental Assessment containing SEA's final recommendations to the Board. An essential part of preparing the PDEA is consultation with agencies or organizations which may have specific interest in or knowledge of the potential environmental impacts.

PPHW is proposing to construct approximately 1,800 ft of new rail line over land that it owns or over which it has an easement. The proposed new rail line would connect two segments of rail line currently owned by PPHW: 1) 1.9 miles of rail line recently purchased from Union Pacific Railroad Company and 2) the 8.29 mile long Keller Branch acquired from the former Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company in 1984. The proposed alignment would be

Hanson Professional Services Inc.

1525 S. Sixth St. • Springfield, IL 62703-2886 • Phone: (217) 788-2450 • Fax: (217) 788-2503



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located adjacent to an active industrial area in which no residences are located. However, it is noted that the proposed construction would result in the construction of a new at-grade crossing at University Street, which, in 2001 had an average daily traffic of approximately 6,800.

In addition to the proposed construction, PPHW would also seek to abandon and railbank approximately 7.5 miles of the Keller Branch. If approved, the abandonment would result in the closure of 24 at-grade crossings and the creation of a recreational trail. The trail would be supervised by the Peoria Park District and would connect the Pimetoui Trail with the Rock Island Trail.

Lastly, there are currently three active shippers on the Keller Branch, two located near its northwestern end and one located near the southeastern end. Following construction of the proposed 1,800 ft of connecting track, it is proposed that the two shippers located near the northwestern end of the Keller Branch be served from the west by a rail carrier with whom the City of Peoria and the Village of Peoria Heights would enter into an operating agreement. It is proposed that the lone shipper located near the southeastern end of the Keller Branch be served from the southeast by the same or a different rail operator.

Figure 2 illustrates the proposals identified above. The yellow-hatched area on the figure is the former UP trackage recently acquired by the City of Peoria. The blue-hatched area is the 7.5 miles of Keller Branch that is proposed to be authorized for abandonment, railbanked and converted to a recreational trail. The red-hatched area is the proposed 1,800 ft construction of connecting track. The green-hatched area is the portion of the Keller Branch that would remain in place after being connected with the former UP line.

Documentation and agency coordination will be conducted to address potential environmental concerns associated with social and economic impacts including environmental justice issues, threatened and endangered species impacts, wetlands impacts, noise and air quality impacts, and Section 4(f) and 6(f) properties. It is anticipated that this project will have no direct or disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations within the project area. No wetlands have been identified within the project alignment. Coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to determine any potential impacts to natural resources. Section 4(f) and 6(f) lands, including public recreational areas, wildlife refuges, and historic sites will also be identified to determine if potential impacts will occur.

Input from your agency will assist us in determining the scope of social, economic, and environmental documentation necessary for this project. If your agency has any specific concerns that you feel should be addressed, please inform Hanson at your earliest convenience. Please submit comments prior to October 5, 2003 to:

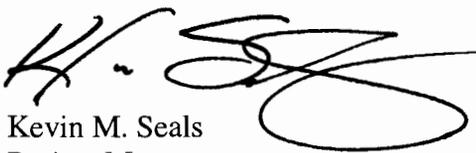


Hanson Professional Services Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703
ATTN: Mr. Kevin Seals

For more information related to this proposed action you may contact me at (217) 788-2450 or Troy Brady of SEA at (610) 793-4301.

Sincerely,

HANSON PROFESSIONAL SERVICES INC.

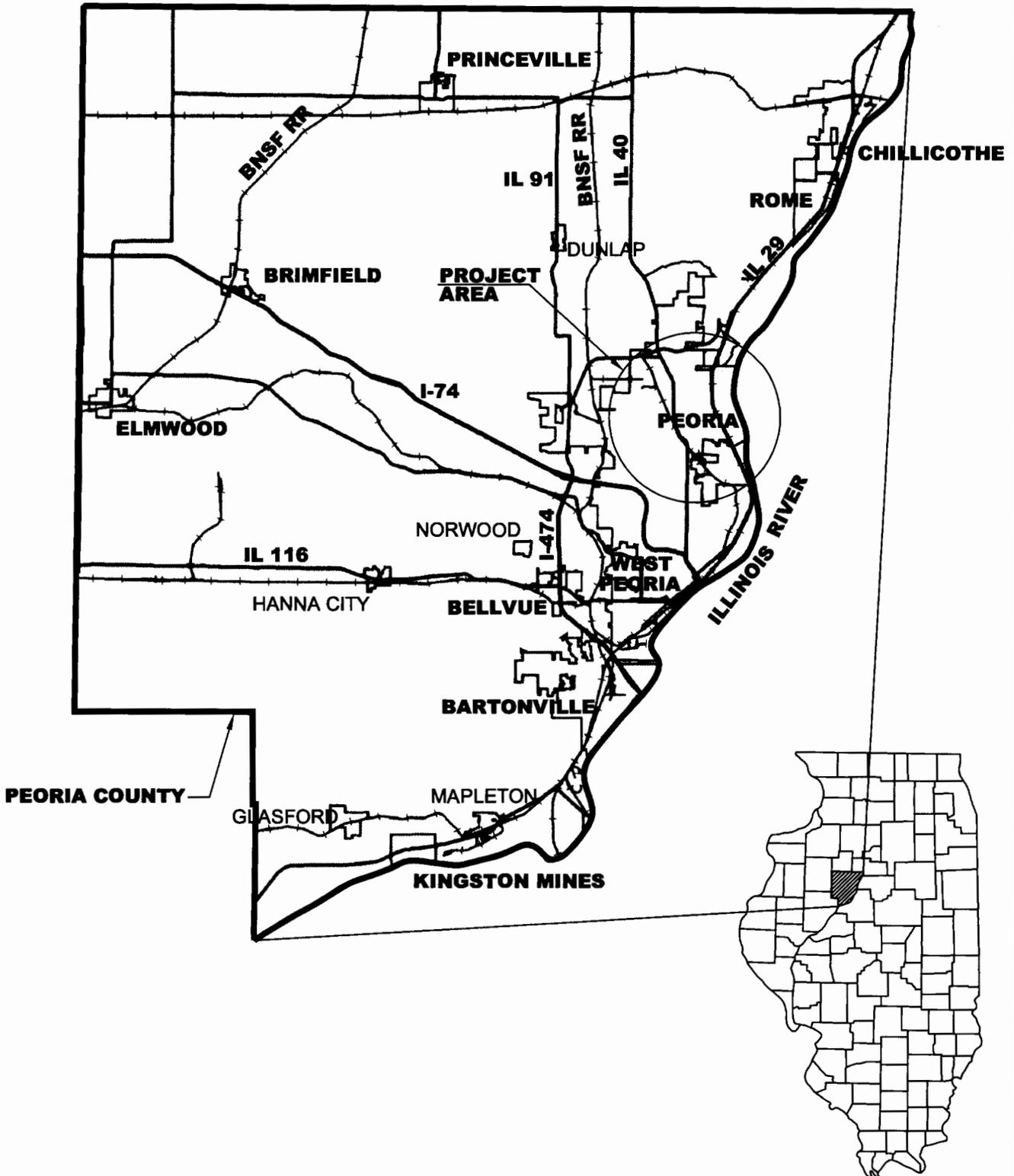


Kevin M. Seals
Project Manager

Enclosures



Hanson Professional Services Inc.



PEORIA COUNTY

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PROJECT LOCATION MAP

**KELLER BRANCH RAIL
CONSTRUCTION & ABANDONMENT
PEORIA, ILLINOIS**



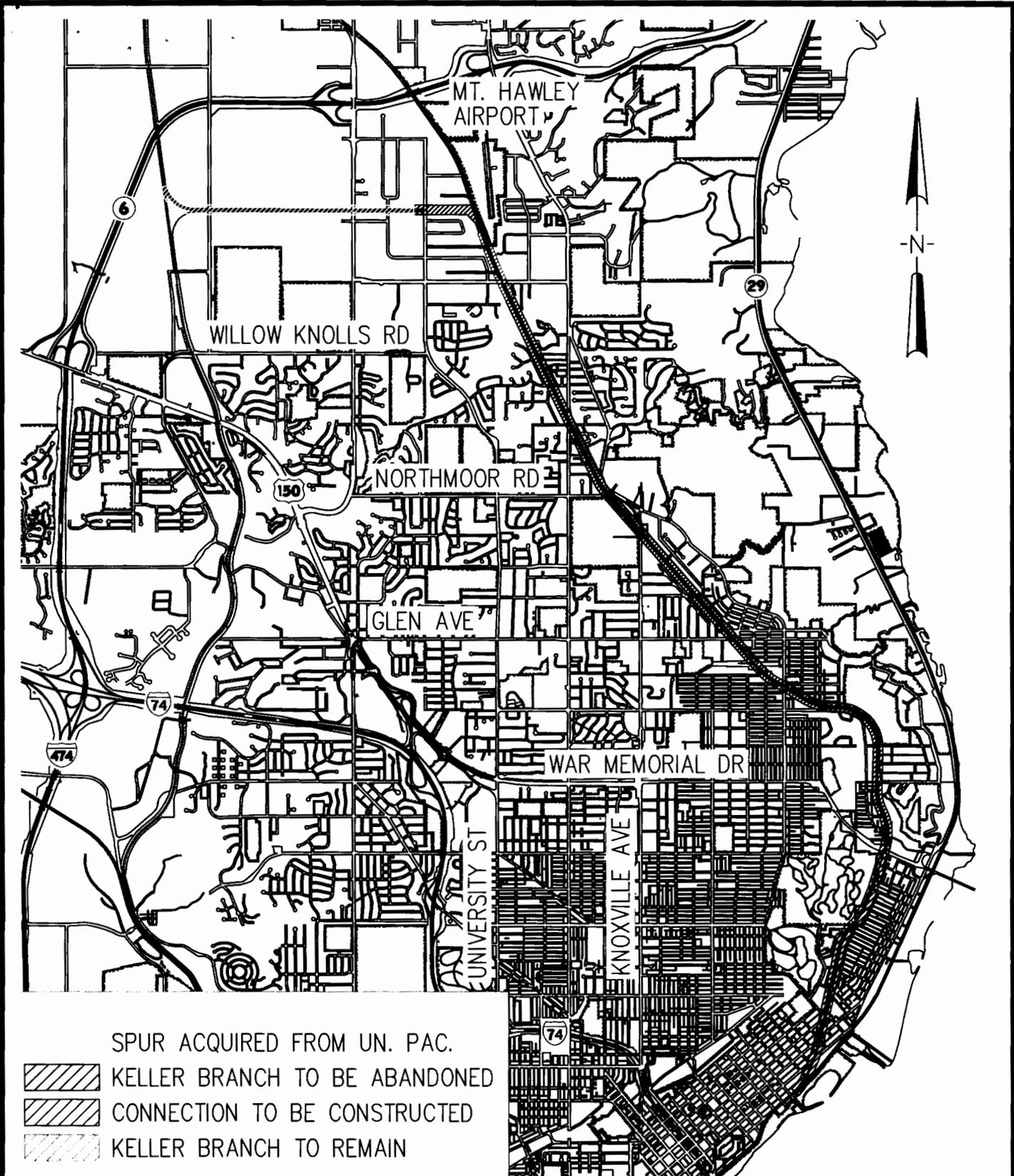
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Hanson Professional Services Inc.
2900 West Willow Knolls Road
Peoria, Illinois 61614-1129

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FIGURE NO. 1

SEP 05, 2003 12:15 PM JLA
I:\02JOB5\02P2007\LOCATION MAP.DWG

SEP 05, 2003 12:12 PM JLA
E:\02\0085\02P2007\02P2007 PROJECT LOC MAP01.DWG



SPUR ACQUIRED FROM UN. PAC.

-  KELLER BRANCH TO BE ABANDONED
-  CONNECTION TO BE CONSTRUCTED
-  KELLER BRANCH TO REMAIN

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PROJECT LOCATION MAP

KELLER BRANCH
RAIL CONNECTION
PEORIA, ILLINOIS

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FIGURE NO. 2