

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

Mr. Nicholas J. DiMichael
Thompson Hine LLP
1920 N Street, NW
Washington DC 20036-1600

July 11, 2005

Re: Keokuk, Iowa Rail Construction Project

Dear Mr. DiMichael:

Pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.10(c), we are granting your request of July 6, 2005 for a waiver of the six month pre-filing notice generally required for construction projects under 49 CFR 1105.10(a)(1).

On June 20, 2005, the Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) met with Roquette America, Inc's (Roquette's) representative, Mr. Eric Tibbetts, and yourself regarding the proposed construction and operation of a new rail line in Keokuk, Iowa. The line would connect Roquette's plant with an existing BNSF Railway (BNSF) rail line and provide the plant with access to a second rail carrier. At the meeting, Mr. Tibbetts provided SEA with an overview of the project, as well as maps and photographs of the area surrounding the proposed rail line.

Currently, Keokuk Junction Railway Company (KJRC) is the only provider of direct rail service to Roquette's plant in Keokuk. The proposed project would involve the construction of a rail line less than one mile in length, and the purpose of the project is to provide competitive rail service to the plant. Roquette does not expect a significant change in current or future rail shipments as a result of the proposed rail line construction.

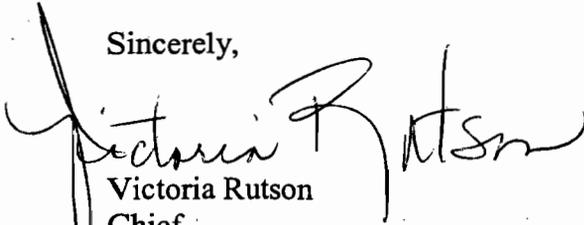
Roquette's plant is a manufacturing facility that produces corn-based starches and syrups used in food and drinks, as well as in paper products, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and agricultural goods. Although the Mississippi River is located near the plant, the proposed project would not require trestles or fill for the construction, and Roquette does not anticipate that the construction or operation of the line would result in any environmental effect on the river. The plant is located in an industrial area, and you indicate that, based on the information available to date, the proposed rail line is not expected to have any significant impacts on wildlife or other biological resources; water quality; minority or low-income populations; or historic/cultural resources.

The proposed rail line would be built on land owned by the City of Keokuk. In addition, the proposed rail line may cross track that is owned and operated by KJRC in order to access the BNSF line. Accordingly, in the event that the proposed line would cross existing KJRC track, Roquette would need to negotiate with KJRC for a crossing agreement pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10901(d).

At the June 20, 2005 meeting, SEA also provided a general overview of the Board's environmental review process, SEA's role in the process and use of third-party consultants. Based on the information from this initial meeting, as well as the preceding information provided by Roquette's representatives, SEA believes that it has adequate information and that the applicant is sufficiently aware of the environmental process to grant this request.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Christa Dean of my staff at (202) 565-1606.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis