



**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
Washington, DC 20423

#E0-13  
RS

*Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration*

May 29, 2003

**Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34284 – Southwest Gulf Railroad Company –  
Construction and Operation Exemption – Medina County, TX**

Dear Interested Party:

The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is conducting an environmental review analyzing the potential environmental issues associated with Southwest Gulf Railroad Company's (SGR's) proposal to build and operate a new, seven-mile rail line in Medina County, Texas. SEA will be holding an open house on Thursday, June 12, 2003, to inform and receive comments from the public about the proposed project and the environmental review process. The open house will be from 5 – 7 p.m. at the McDowell Middle School cafeteria at 1602 27<sup>th</sup> St. in Hondo, Texas.

### **The Environmental Review Process**

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) is a Federal regulatory agency with jurisdiction over proposals to construct and operate rail lines. Because SGR's proposed rail construction and operation is a major Federal action requiring Board approval, SEA is conducting an environmental review of the potential environmental impacts of SGR's proposal in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

After conducting appropriate environmental studies, SEA will issue for public review and comment a draft environmental document setting forth SEA's preliminary recommendations and conclusions. SEA will then consider all comments received from the general public, government agencies, and other interested parties, and will conduct further analysis and review, if necessary, before submitting its final recommendations to the Board. Upon completion of the environmental review, the Board will issue a final decision on SGR's proposal.

SEA's environmental review of the rail line will involve an analysis of the following areas:

- Safety and health;
- Land use;
- Environmental justice;

- Physical setting;
- Water resources;
- Biological resources;
- Transportation;
- Air quality;
- Noise;
- Cultural resources;
- Recreational resources;
- Social and economic effects; and
- Cumulative effects.

### **SGR's Proposed Project**

SGR's proposed rail line would extend about seven miles from a new Vulcan Materials Company limestone quarry in Medina County to a connection with the Union Pacific Railroad Company near Dunlay, Texas. Although the line would primarily serve the quarry, SGR states that it would also be available to serve any other nearby industries in the future.

After examining a number of alternatives, SGR has identified a proposed route that, although not the shortest, avoids environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and crosses a smaller number of properties than the alternative routes. The attached map shows SGR's proposed route and the alternative routes.

The "no build" alternative would involve transporting crushed rock via trucks from the quarry to a new rail loading facility that would be constructed near Dunlay.

### **Open House**

Public participation is an important part of the environmental review process. SEA is conducting the open house to provide all interested members of the public with an opportunity to learn about the environmental review process for this rail project and participate in the environmental review process.

Representatives of SEA and of SEA's consultant, URS Corporation, Inc., who is working under the supervision, direction, and control of SEA to assist in the preparation of the environmental document, will be available to answer your questions and hear your concerns.

We hope you will join us on June 12th and look forward to providing you with additional information about the environmental review process and hearing your comments on the proposed project. If you have any questions about the open house, please contact the project hotline at 512-419-5941.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "V".

Victoria Rutson  
Chief  
Section of Environmental Analysis