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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration

July 30, 2008

Allyson Brooks, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer
Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 48343
Olympia, WA 98504-8343

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34936, Northern Columbia Basin
Railroad Project in Moses Lake, Washington; Draft Cultural
Resources Discipline Report

Dear Dr. Brooks:

As you know, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Surface Transportation Board (Board) are serving as co-lead agencies for the environmental review of a proposed rail line construction project called the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project. The project is located in the Moses Lake area of Grant County, Washington.

The Board's approval of the proposed project is considered an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f (NHPA), and is thus covered under its provisions. The Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is the office within the Board responsible for conducting the environmental review process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), including the NHPA.

The purpose of this letter is to submit the Draft Cultural Resources Discipline Report (Report) for your review and comment.

The Draft Cultural Resources Discipline Report

The attached Report was prepared based on the results of archival, field, archeological, and architectural studies. The Report includes descriptions of the proposed project and the project area, maps, and preliminary findings. The Board will make its final determination of whether the proposed rail construction project would have any effect on historic resources following receipt of comments from participating federally-recognized tribes and your office.

Tribal Government-to-Government Consultation

With regard to Native American tribal consultation, the Board and WSDOT initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Wanapum Tribe, the Colville Confederated Tribes, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation in February 2007. On April 28, 2008, a copy of the Report was sent to each of the above-listed tribes for review. Included in the Report was a copy of the letter from Matthew Sterner of your office concurring with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) determination. The Warm Springs Tribe, the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Wanapum Tribe have declined to comment. However, the Yakama Nation is still reviewing the Report. If the Yakama Nation provides comments, we will forward them to your office.

Request For Comments

Comments from the Board's co-lead agency, WSDOT, have already been addressed in the attached Report. Please submit any comments or suggested changes regarding the Report within 30 days of receiving this letter.

Please send written comments to:

Section of Environment Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Attn: Christa Dean, Attorney
395 E Street, SW, Room 1108
Washington, DC 20423

The WSDOT contact for this proposed project is Elizabeth Phinney, Rail Environmental Manager, at (360)705-7902 or phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov. The Board contact for this proposed project is Christa Dean, Attorney and Project Manager, at (202) 245-0299 or christa.dean@stb.dot.gov. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this proceeding, please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Phinney or Christa Dean.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis

Enclosure: Draft Cultural Resources Discipline Report

cc: Elizabeth Phinney, WSDOT Rail