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April 23, 2004

Troy Brady
Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Finance Docket No. 34395
Request for comments/consultation on Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Brady,

In reviewing the Surface Transportation Board's Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA), Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) offers the following comments in regards to the construction of the connecting track in Pioneer Park.

By constructing the proposed 1,800 feet of connecting track in Pioneer Park, operating efficiencies and public safety will be greatly enhanced. Train traffic will be diverted from 6.7 miles of rails currently used for service (Keller Branch). The Keller Branch cuts through numerous residential and commercial areas throughout Peoria and Peoria Heights from downtown Peoria to Pioneer Park. Additionally, the diversion of rail traffic from the Keller Branch to the 1,800 feet of connecting track contributes to traffic safety by eliminating 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings. TCRPC supports the creation of a new at-grade crossing at University Street due to the elimination of 26 highway/rail at-grade crossings along the Keller Branch rail line. Furthermore, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission supports the recommended environmental mitigation measures outlined under Chapter 6.0 in the EA.

As outlined in Chapter 6.0 in the EA, construction and operation of the proposed 1,800 feet of connecting track should have no significant environmental impacts if the PPHW implements the recommended mitigation measures set forth in the EA. Because of this, we believe an environmental impact statement process is unnecessary in this proceeding.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 309-673-9796, x223.

Best regards,


Joshua Barbee
Transportation Planner

Cc: Steve Van Winkle, City of Peoria

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