

Chairman Daniel R. Elliott III  
Vice Chairman Deb Miller  
Member Ann D. Begeman  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington DC 20423  
202-245-0350

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RE: Docket # FD36025

Dear Chairman Elliott, Vice Chairman Miller, and Board Member Begeman,

Please consider my letter as a recorded comment in strong opposition to the proposed Texas Central Railway (TCR) and Central Japan Railway partnership project. The TCR's proposal to build a high-speed rail from Houston to Dallas might seem like a noble effort on its face, but it is ultimately harmful to the State, its citizens and the environment.

I oppose this project for six reasons:

**I. Unnecessary**

Inexpensive and safe air travel is already readily available between Dallas and Houston. Additionally, Interstate 45, which was recently expanded, currently services ground travel between the two cities with no foreseeable delays. There is no demand for a high-speed rail from the public in general.

**II. Infeasible**

Aside from being unnecessary, the project is also infeasible. A recent report by Reason Foundation (Feigenbaum, 2013) found that only two high-speed rail projects in the entire world actually earn a profit. Part of the reason is because of political pressure to make the projects appear attractive to the general public, but they are generally underutilized and more costly than anticipated. The study finds that cost estimates for 90% of the transportation infrastructure projects studied were underestimated by 28%. Rail projects were particularly bad offenders, coming in at an average of 45% over budget. The same study also cites a 67% overestimation of ridership among those same transportation projects. I don't see any reason for us to expect a different outcome for prospective travelers between Houston and Dallas. The current projected cost for the Houston-Dallas corridor is \$10 billion. If the project falls in line with the statistics provided in the Feigenbaum study, its actual cost could exceed \$14.5 billion.

**III. Safety**

It's difficult to imagine the intense level of security that would be required to police hundreds of miles of railway tracks. The potential for terrorist and other nefarious activity is alarmingly high. It's not difficult however, to imagine a hijacking or bombing situation. Such a scenario could wreak havoc on lives and property for miles.

**IV. Economic impact**

Many proponents of this project claim that it will create jobs. Arguably, that's not untrue.

Unfortunately, many of these jobs will be crated in Japan due to the partnership with Central Japan Railway. There's very little clarity on just how many long-term jobs will be based in the U.S. Even assuming a 50/50 split on 10,000 jobs, it doesn't seem that the creation of 5,000 jobs, which may not be long-term, would justify the risks.

**V. Environmental impact**

This project will most certainly disturb wildlife areas throughout the 11 affected counties. If the rail must be built – and I strongly argue that it must not – wouldn't a more sensible approach be to route it along the I-45 corridor where easements already exist? Surely this would result in a less traumatic environmental disturbance. The proposed rail would also affect access points for those who rely on passage between communities. Many county and state roads will be dissected, resulting in disconnection between rural communities.

**VI. Property rights**

The partnership has requested an exemption from SB 18, which I find to be rather ironic. This law was enacted by Governor Perry and the Texas legislature to specifically prevent such abuses. Doesn't the mere fact that it must petition the state of Texas for an exemption belie the truth that such an exemption would violate the constitutional rights of its residents?

Not content to violate the rights of property owners along the proposed route, the consortium has stated openly that it wishes to forcibly acquire property "in locations not ultimately identified" on its final route. How can there be a claim to eminent domain when at least some of the property in question isn't identifiable as necessary for the project.

For these reasons, no exemptions whatsoever should be given for the proposal by Texas Central Railway and Central Japan Railway. All normal procedures should be followed. I request that the Board thoroughly review the issues at hand. Thank you for your consideration of my comment.

Regards,

Joshua Tyi Want

8747 Sunny Gallop Dr  
Tomball, TX 77375

**CC: All parties of record**