

ET-1343

January 8, 2005

Surface Transportation Board
Case control Unit
Washington, D.C. 20432

*received
1/11/05*

Attention: Rini Ghosh
STB Docket No. FD 34284

Dear Ms. Ghosh:

We are writing this letter through our Congressman, Henry Bonilla. The community of Quihi is in his jurisdiction and we believe he needs to be informed on all aspects of this major project in Medina County.

The quarry and railroad must be studied as a connected action. There will be no railroad without this quarry. They both affect the same geographical area; they both impact the flooding and contribute to the possible groundwater contamination and or loss of our precious water supply.

Medina County water allocations to its' communities are already stressed and Vulcan's projected heavy use of our Edwards Aquifer water will create a larger problem for future growth.

These are connected actions and the quarry and railroad must be studied as one. To do otherwise would be a tremendous injustice to Medina County. If this railroad is approved, we must feel that our federal authorities have carefully considered all environmental impacts this project is creating.

Vulcan keeps stating that they are talking with the people about this project in Quihi. Just who are they talking to? The people of Quihi that will be most affected have never been contacted by Vulcan. The owners' of the properties that will be taken by eminent domain are still waiting for Vulcan to talk to them. Is this how big business works? Is this how STB gives powers of eminent domain to a paper railroad? Studying the issues involved should take both sides into account.

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We all know that the Medina Valley Times came out just before the December STB meeting in Hondo, saying that the railroad had been approved. Only Vulcan could have released this news. That meeting and this opportunity to write a final response is all a governmental farce unless some of the problems are answered before railroad authorization is given instead of mitigation afterwards.

Let's see Vulcan give real answers to the flooding and traffic safety and our inadequate county roads and just how much this will cost Medina County as they destroy this area.

We are particularly concerned about the flooding issues since we live on Elm Creek and have been through several floods since 1995 when we purchased this property. We want clarification about the letter in volume II, C-39 of the draft EIS. This URS inter office memo regarding the Medina County flood plain standards, states that Pat Brawner, the Medina County FEMA Coordinator, confirmed that Medina County has development standards demonstrating that the proposed construction does not cause more than a 12 inch rise in the 100 year flood plain .

The memos' last sentence is, and I quote "This allows for the study to be preformed in the future, and a finding of "no significant impact" based on SGR's necessary compliance with Medina County code is appropriate."

The finding of "no significant impact" in the DEIS is a slap in the face to all the residents in Quihi who's live's are affected during the floods. Many residents are home bound because of the flooded roads and numerous overflowing creeks in the area.

This area has already had a 500 year flood, according to Mr. Brawner, in 1997. Imagine the flooding issues if a rail line changes the flow of water in the area during another excessive rainfall.

Before any railroad permit is issued, the residents in Quihi need to know how the 12 inch rise would change our flood plain and what structures could be affected . Any flooding caused by the quarry and railroad cannot be mitigated away.

The final route approved by the STB board must be the best route for this area, not just the preferred route that Vulcan wants. More serious consideration needs to be given to the old Medina Dam railroad route as this will take the rail line out of the Quihi flood plain.

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We are asking that before the STB Board makes their final decision to give SGR the right of eminent domain by granting this railroad, that the transcript of the public hearing held at Medina County fairgrounds on December 2, 2004 is read by the decision making Board and they can confidently say that our questions have been addressed and the approval of the railroad does not do an injustice to the citizens of Quihi.

Respectfully yours,

Thomas W. Walpole

Mary F. Walpole

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cc: US Congressman Henry Bonilla
cc: US Senator John Cornyn
cc: US Senator Kay Hutchison
cc: Texas State Senator Frank Madla