

Mr. Fitzgerald:

Like you, I am fast approaching 80 years old. While my body may be old, my mind is still young and sharp. I am a lifelong Medina County resident. Many people are moving to Medina County, building houses and living on small ranches. The area is changing. This is necessary. But along with change comes responsibility of our elected officials and governmental agencies to insure that these necessary changes are done in ways that maximize the benefit for as many people as possible. It is not possible to satisfy everyone.

The Vulcan Rock Company wants to build a rock quarry here and a railroad to ship this material to other areas across the state. This will bring needed jobs to the area for the young people to stay here rather than moving away. Medina County has lots of rock so it is a good thing to sell.

Vulcan says that they will build the quarry regardless of the railroad. Vulcan says that without their railroad spur, they would deliver rock by truck from the quarry to the main railroad line. Vulcan says the community has a choice, either let them build their railroad or they will run hundreds of trucks every day through the small community. This is their Achilles heel.

Vulcan claims that they could truck the material from the quarry to the railroad and still make money but that by building the railroad they can save money and do it more safely and causing less damage.

So now as I understand it, taking Vulcan at their word that they would truck the rock if their railroad is not built, the dispute in the community now appears to center on which route the railroad should be built upon.

I have reviewed the maps in the reports and the papers. I know very well the area that Vulcan most desires to go through with their railroad. I also see the advantage of the new routes which bypass much of the area along Quihi Creek. Of course these new routes to the east are a little further.

But here is the real question for me: if Vulcan is claiming that they would truck the material from the quarry to the rail, which means that it would still be profitable (otherwise why make the threat), then how can Vulcan claim that the new eastern routes are not acceptable? While these eastern routes may be a few miles further than their preferred route, surely the benefits of avoiding these historic areas and being about to use rail still outweigh the cost of trucking material from the quarry to the main railroad which they are holding over our head as a threat.

As far as I can tell, Vulcan's only claim against accepting the new eastern routes is that their cost to mitigate the effects to the historic area along their preferred route is less expensive than having to build the additional rail line proposed in the new eastern routes. However, the comparison should not be the difference between the new eastern routes and Vulcan's preferred

route, but rather between the new eastern route and the trucking option.

While it is clear that Vulcan has purchased significant property along their preferred route and therefore to build the route in a different area would be more expensive, this should not be the problem of the STB's, but rather the problem of Vulcan's for pursuing the purchasing of land along a specific route before consulting the STB and performing an EIS. But then again, they only engaged the STB when several landowners took it upon themselves and banded together to prevent Vulcan from building an unwanted railroad through their property. The STB was simply used as a tool to take what they otherwise could not buy fairly, even though they had ample opportunity.

How can the STB claim clear objectivity in their analysis of routes when the route, proposed, promoted, and preferred by Vulcan includes substantial tracts of land which Vulcan purchased before engaging the STB process? With respect to this, as a result of public comment and only because of the public comment did the STB develop a supplemental EIS that details three additional eastern routes. These routes while certainly less advantageous to Vulcan certainly are less than the cost of the No-Build Alternative (trucking option) that Vulcan so adamantly has threatened to pursue.

***Therefore a question to the STB would be: if the eastern routes proposed in the supplemental EIS adequately address the concerns of the public comment and represent a cheaper, safer, and environmentally beneficial option over the No-Build alternative, then how could the STB allow Vulcan to pursue their preferred alternative given that Vulcan has publicly stated that they would pursue the trucking option absent the consent to build the railroad?***

Clearly a couple of extra miles of track wouldn't sink the project, especially if Vulcan has stated that the trucking option would be pursued and is therefore financially acceptable. What is a few extra miles of track cost up front versus selling 200 million tons of aggregate (\$ 1 - \$ 2 billion dollars in total revenue) over the next 50 years?

It must be recognized again that Vulcan only formed Southwest Gulf Railroad as a vehicle to utilize the STB's power in building the railroad after they wouldn't pay a fair price for the land along the rail path. With Vulcan unwilling to pay a fair price for the land, the landowners had no choice but to protect themselves from Vulcan's intentions and create a protective covenant. Once the land covenant was created, Vulcan formed the Railroad Company and started the STB process expressly to obtain the land that they were otherwise unwilling to buy.

***The MCEAA should send a signal to the STB that they endorse the eastern routes proposed in the Supplemental EIS over the preferred routes in the original EIS provided that the STB require Vulcan to use only these eastern routes. Should the STB stand behind a recommendation that Vulcan pursue the eastern***

routes, the STB would have done their job and the public could only applaud their decision.

Such an act by the MCEAA would kill the whole project. Vulcan does not want to use these eastern routes.

Combined with the acquiescence on the quarry, accepting the eastern routes would demonstrate that the MCEAA was successful in taking on the largest Aggregate Company in the US and effecting a change. In reality, should the STB stand firm on the eastern routes, the MCEAA effectively killed the project, but the blame can be placed squarely on Vulcan.

To prove this: call Vulcan and propose a joint statement to that effect, Vulcan and MCEAA agree on eastern route - MCEAA agrees to withdraw any opposition. If Vulcan refuses, then the answer is clear. If Vulcan accepts, then explain that you changed your mind and continue your fight.

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