

Green Eagle Railroad EIS Public Meeting

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SPEAKERS

Stephanie Roberts, Andrea Poole Transcription via Microsoft Teams.

Stephanie Roberts 0:0.0.0

Welcome to the public scoping meeting for the proposed freight rail project in Eagle Pass. Thank you for being seated on time and we will begin our presentation. We will be taking the comments after this presentation, and this comment session and the presentation are being recorded, so please be aware. I would like to present Andrea Poole with the Surface Transportation Board to my right, and also Laurent Cartayrade. He is the project manager for the independent consultant for the environmental analysis on this project. I'd like to welcome Andrea to the podium now for the presentation. Thank you.

Andrea Poole 0:0:35.60

Please clap after, if I don't fall down, right, um, welcome. So, the Surface Transportation Board. Oh, let me start with the agenda. Here we go. My name is Andrea Poole, and I'm with the Surface Transportation Board, and I want to thank you guys all for coming. It makes my job a lot easier when there's a lot of public input into the very beginning of our process. I'm going to go over with you a little bit today our agenda. I want to let you know a little bit about who the Surface Transportation Board is, and our role with the American public and your taxpayer dollars. I want to go over the proposed action of the of the project, the reason I'm here and this whole process has started. I'll introduce the applicant for the project. The purpose and need, the board action because the Surface Transportation Board is a Board of politically appointed individuals that make decisions on the construction and operation and railroad lines. I want go over, very importantly, the environmental process and that's why I'm here today and go over those steps with you, make sure you understand all the commenting opportunities that are available to you, how to stay engaged, and then, the last hour come and go as you please. It's a little like an open house. We'll be listening to comments that you might like both needed here and your fellow citizens to here, but if you want to make a private comment, then there are ways to do that both in written form and in verbal form.

So let me go ahead and get started. If you have your phones on, if you turn them to vibrate for me, I'm not very good at this yet. So, you know, it'll distract me. So, the Surface Transport Board, we're an independent federal agency. We're pretty small on the federal agency side and we came out of the ICC. What we do is help provide surface transportation solutions to get goods and products across state lines. Or... I have a couple of examples, I feel like analogies always help, specially the further you get outside of the Beltway of Washington, DC it's just all a bunch of alphabet, right? So, the International Commerce Commission was the agency before the Surface Transportation Board. The ICC... one example that I find so fascinating was before the ICC had a regulation, truckers had to stop at every state border and put on new mud flaps because each state had their own mud flap requirement, and they would get ticketed if they didn't. That slows things down, right? If you only have so many hours you can drive. You know that's valuable time. So, for example, in the ICC, instituted a regulation where that was standardized across the nation. Today, the Surface Transportation Board mostly manages things like freight rail. So, I've given this example to a few of you today. If you are, let's say a

grain operator, you have corn that goes to market twice a year. You don't need a whole rail line that goes from your farm all over the country. You need a space on an already existing freight rail line. And so, the Surface Transportation Board regulates the economics of those scenes so that you can get... your grain to the market at a reasonable price, with assurances that it's on time by the federal government, right? So, we regulate things like that. So, I'm with the Office of Environmental Analysis within the Surface Transportation Board, we have a lot of lawyers because we are our own court. So, we can fine companies. We are mostly economists, so, all of the math that goes with finding a fair price.

Audience Member 0:4:53.0

Can you speak into the speaker?

Andrea Poole 0:4:54.900

Oh yes, I'm sorry, I really thought my voice carried all the way to the next county. Thank you for raising your hand. So, I work for the Surface Transportation Board, the Office of Environmental Analysis looks at the environmental impacts of everything that our federal agency does. We also have a lot of economists at our agency, and they look at all the economics of getting... for that farmer, maybe getting his grain all over the country for a fair reasonable price when he needs it on time and then we have a court that hands out fines and... has, you know, just the judiciary thing to enforce those actions. So, why I'm here today is we're at the very beginning of a process, a new rail line company is come and ask for permission to construct and operate, and so we'll be looking at the transportation merits at that. I'll be looking at the environmental merits of that project and we'll write reports will give them to the Board and then those politically appointed people will make a decision on that. So, our proposed action, we have a board of... that you guys may have looked at and I hear the maps on the tables have been pretty productive. So, the reason I'm here today is because our agency got a petition, which is a... the legal document that's necessary to start this process to go from this existing UP line, connects here, and goes down through here, this is Seco Creek here, and cross the border with a new bridge. That ends my regulatory control, but that's not the whole project. So, from an environmental standpoint, we're going to look at the rest of it because there's no reason for the this all by itself, right? The rest of the project is. There's a commercial vehicle bridge right here. It'll go up and do all of those international trade things they do and get it inspected. There's inspection facilities here. There's a tower here. There's a road that comes up and connects with a Farm-to-Market road up here. I'm looking at all of this, and so, I need your comments today on what are you concerned with, alright? Oh, the things that my staff thinks are important to tell you. This is 1.3 miles. This is 1.3 miles. The rail line is secure, double tracked rail. No roads crossing... it will, so there's no at grade crossings for this particular line route. On the Mexico side of the border, we will be taking a cursory look at that, but the American government has no control over how the Mexican government operates. But they'll have a rail line in a... and the commercial vehicle traffic line, I think, is about 18 miles that goes to Ferronex and wherever that needs to go on the Mexican side of the border.

So, the applicant for this project is a company called Green Eagle Railroad. They're limited liability company. They're subsidiary of a group called Puerto Verde Holdings or Puerto Verde Global, and they are the applicant for the rail line and the project proponent for, you know, the whole thing that I kind of described to you very quickly. But the reason I'm here in the federal action is the railroad, so, we're calling this a Green Eagle Railroad EIS, okay? So, the environmental... the National Environmental Policy Act requires that federal agencies look at things that they're involved in since Green Eagle Railroad needs permission from the federal

government to own construct and operate this rail line. We're going to do an environmental analysis. By looking at the... natural surroundings and stuff, we've decided we're going to do the highest level of environmental analysis, we're going to do an environmental analysis... an Environmental Impact Statement and that offers us a little more public output opportunity and a little more in depth look because we have a lot of questions about what may or may not be an impact. And part of that is coming up with the purpose and need for us to be here. Now, in environmental policy we have a what we call a problem statement that comes with a solution. The solution needs an environmental review, so the statement, or the problem statement is, you know, we need an economically viable solution to meet the ever-expanding need for border infrastructure improvements, especially maybe in Eagle Pass, that includes safety, facilitate bi-national trade between the United States and Mexico. So, this project proponent, Green Eagle Railroad, has proposed rail line that they say the design of... will resolve that rail congestion, reduce cross border wait times, and route rail traffic around the urban Center of Eagle Pass. So, my job at the at the Board, you know, will review those transportation merits and the environmental merits of the project and then we will hand that information back over to the board and will make a decision on whether or not to grant the project as proposed. They may request different alternatives or mitigations. Mitigations are things that that we say, oh well, the project would be good, but you should move the line here or you should make sure that this permit is gotten... or whatever. Those are the sort of considerations that the Board can take and evaluate, but at the end of the day, they'll either grant that request for a new rail line, they'll deny it, or they'll grant it with those mitigations.

In addition to the Board, these following regulatory agencies have decisions on this project and we're going to be working with them. They're the specific resource agencies that protect your air, protect your water, build bridges that are safe, have security concerns... So, the Surface Transportation Board, that's our alphabet and our emblem over to the left, the US Coast Guard, cause we are crossing the Rio Grande, we have some Seco Creek issues and there will need to be bridges... they're going to be involved. And, you know, if you can read it under there, it kind of shows you what their sort of involvement and what they look like. IBWC, they have treaties to maintain, and they have requirements for construction to make sure water flow and flooding is safe. And then Army Corps of Engineers certainly has a role in the waters of the United States, you know, they have the Harbor act, they facilitate the movement of traffic through the water, they do wetlands, they do other surface waters, they protect underground waters and stuff. So, the proposed action will also require, aside from our permission, permits, conditions, regulations, operational standards, and things from these agencies. Customs and Border Protection isn't up here because they don't play a direct role in the environmental process, but we will be working closely with them as I know I heard today... state and security concerns, and, so, Customs and Border Protection with the design of the facilities that they'd be working in. They certainly have like design standards and construction mechanisms and things that they'll want to see in the final design of that, but we know they're going to operate there, they just don't need to be involved here. They'll be involved in that final design to ensure that they can operate efficiently. This is my favorite slide. This is the process that we are going to take to analyze the environmental considerations that you and I think are important that we need to look at and make them publicly available. So, the Surface Transportation Board, my office issued a Notice of Intent and that went in the Federal Register. In that Federal Register notice, in the things that you maybe... the banner ad you've seen on your phone, the newspaper announcements, you know, what you heard from your buddy at the poker table, the swimming pool, or the grocery store, somebody saw that banner ad, somebody saw the Federal Register notice and it got you here today. And for that, I'm grateful.

So, what we're doing now in the process is called scoping. And what we're doing is we're scoping the analysis... that umbrella of those environmental concerns, socioeconomic, looking

at alternatives. This is your community, you know what's important to you, you know the best place for this sort of project to exist, it could be right here with pros and cons... I'd love to get alternatives from you guys today on... hey, it can also go here, and it would benefit X, Y, and Z. Then if you moved it down here, you know, and we can look at those things. That is the spirit of the NEPA process and important for us today. Today we'd also be interested in hearing concerns. I heard a couple of concerns about hazardous materials transport. We'll definitely be covering that in our Environmental Impact Statement along with all the regulars, bugs, bunnies, air noise, water... all of those are pretty standard. But if you have specific concerns, please write them down because the Environmental Impact Statement is not for me, it's to make sure you understand your decision as the public, right? This is, you know, when we were importing liquified natural gas, there were some tough decisions that they need to make. Do you want a hot shower, or do you want a fish sandwich? Because fish are losing their lives through this process, right? So, there's tradeoffs and I want you to be aware of all of them. So after scope, I'm going to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement. And when I say I am, these really smart people that are my third-party contractor, they're the group of scientists and... they have site specific knowledge that went to school to study the birds, the bees, the air impacts, the water impacts, and noise impacts that group of scientists will come together and we'll draft an Environmental Impact Statement based on your concerns and the concerns we get from the regulatory agencies during scoping. That will be available for public review and comment. We usually do that for about 45 days. During that 45-day period, we're going to come back and we're going to go, did you read it, did I get everything, and did I get everything right? And that's what will take your comments. We will respond to all your comments if they are substantial, if you said my cows loose, I'll say I'm sorry, but that has nothing to do with my process. But, you know, we're going to take your comments when the draft's out and then we're going to write a final Environmental Impact Statement. If you guys say, OK, but what about the protection of this, you didn't cover it? If we need to do additional analysis, that's when we'll do it, and then we'll do the final. You guys will tell me what you like... you know, you guys will come up with your understanding of the project and then I'm going to give it to the Board. So, we'll make that final EIS available. My document will go to the politically appointed Board, the transportation analysis, and the economic analysis will come from a different department. And those five politically appointed board members will look at all that information and they'll make their decision. So up here on the right-hand side, you'll see the quarters. It normally takes us about two years to get an Environmental Impact Statement. When we're ready for you to look at something, you guys will have plenty of notice. Sometimes we can be a little faster, sometimes something will come up as slow as down a little, but we'll keep you informed through all the ways that you found out this time where we are so we can get your input again. The potential impact areas, we already know we're going to look at all these things: transportation, air quality, land use, water resources, biological resources... you guys can read that. But if there's something up there that you interested in, make sure you give me a comment, OK? And how do you comment? There's tables back there - written, verbal, I have translation services available to you. You'll have a public speaking opportunity to come and talk to us today and you could always make a comment - leave a comment for the Surface Transportation Board through our Public Commenting series. This is what my website looks like, and Stephanie made a cool video. Does it work?

Stephanie Roberts 0:19:55.590

Maybe click one more time.

Andrea Poole 0:20:4.480

OK. Let's see, the project is 36652 – the docket. The Board looks at a lot of things so make sure you put that number there. You can write your comments directly on there if they're short. You can also attach maps, documents, PDF, whatever and they will be shared. They are publicly available documents once they're posted on the website, and you can see what all your neighbors are concerned with, with the writing. Voice your concerns if they're different, or they're the same and you want to agree with something somebody else wrote all of that viable information. We also have a project website that's going to keep you updated with our process so you can come to one place and not have to futz around finding your way... all the way through the Surface Transportation Board's many projects that we're working on. And this is the landing page for that, it's greeneaglerailroadeis.com. If you push the little star button, it'll come up on your Google Chrome or whatever - you keep coming back as long as you'd like to. So, how to stay engaged - let us know. You can look it up at the project website, you can contact Green Eagle Railroad EIS, you can leave a message on the number that's listed up here and get a response. I'm not sitting at the phone 24 hours, but they will come to me, and I'll respond to you. You have any questions? You can send an email here. You know, it's an iterative process - it's not open and closed. This is a live process going back and forth, so we want you to stay involved. Alright, thank you so much for listening to me. Now I'm ready to listen to you guys. Remember docket number 36652, thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:22:53.470

Give us one moment while we set up. Thank you for that, everyone. We would like to begin our public comment session. We would like you to know that this is still being recorded, that there is a time limit of three minutes. At the two-minute mark, you will be flashing yellow sign by the person sitting over there in the corner and at 3 minutes we will flash the red sign. We ask you to finish your thought as soon as possible to allow time for the rest of the speakers. We request no profanity and to keep comments civil. And we are not taking questions, and this is only a public comment period. And what we will be doing with your comments is using that, as Andrea said, to help us understand what the Community would like us to analyze. So, this is just a feedback session from you, the people who live in Eagle Pass, to us to let us know what's important to you. We would like you... we're going to be calling up folks in the order that they registered. We had some folks pre-register for the meeting. So, we're going to call them up first and then we'll go in order of the people signed up today. If there's any time left, we will offer if anyone else in the audience would like to comment, we'll do a hand raising session. How this will work is I will call a couple of names, in kind of like a baseball rotation, you know, we got who's on bat, who's, you know, next up to bat, who's next up to bat after that, so, you can be ready. Please step up to the microphone right here. State your name slowly and if possible, spell it out. This is not in your time period, just... we want to make sure that we have your name correct when we transcribe everything. Before we do start this, I'd like to ask if there's any state or local representatives, that would like to give a 3-minute comment first? Okay, then we will start with our pre-registered speakers. The first speaker will be Roberto Ruiz, the second speaker, David Hickerson, and the third speaker will be Crawford Roads. So, Mr. Roberto Ruiz, please come up to the microphone.

Comment 1 - Roberto Ruiz: 0:25:38.140

Good morning. My name is Roberto Ruiz. I am an elected official. I am a County Commissioner. And I come before you, I guess you can say wearing multiple masks. Not only as an elected official, and as an elected official I've been here for 12 to 20 years, and I appreciate your time for

coming here to hear from us. My... I'm giving you the time that I have been an elected official because I feel I have the same... I think I have the call of the Community of what they want, what they need. And I'm sure... there will be a different opinion. But my opinion is very simple and I am speaking in favor of the Green Eagle Railroad. That I want to make you very sure of that. A little bit of my background as I already said I have my roots here in Eagle Pass, we raised the family here in Eagle Pass, and we are very conscious that our community is moving forward. We are very conscious there that our community is really grown in different direction, but I also understand what my constituents are asking from us elected officials and that is to work accordingly and move our... city forward and that's exactly what my reason being here. And I did not just think to come here and speak in favor of this project because I think it will have some financial problems for the entire community in Maverick County. This project is, from the map that I've seen, it's only a little bit of more than a mile long and it's, I think, the project has been objective. The main objective should be... is to move away from the urban area so that it will be... it... the railroad has created different kinds of health effects, in my opinion. Starting with the noise pollution, I mean, if you live inside the city limits, that is a... quite a problem that would live for years because the railroad operates 24/7. The noise and the vibrations and also, the air pollution... with the exhaust from trains from the diesel engine. In fact, I guess the traffic will move away from the hub of the city and also not only from Eagle Pass but at the same time will help with our brothers and sisters across the river to Mexico that way, probably [Inaudible].

Stephanie Roberts 0:29:5.880

I'm sorry that is time Mr. Ruiz.

Robert Ruiz: 0:29:8.860

Thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:29:8.860

Mr. Hickerson please.

Comment 2 – David Hickerson 0:29:18.950

I feel really bad with my back to the audience, I don't know how that worked. My name is David Hickerson, I am a retired CBP official I have like 49 years of service with CBP. I was in charge of Eagle Pass and the Laredo Field Office for about 7 years. I have been in South Texas for 49 years of it I was operating as a manager with the CBP. I would like to point out from CBP, and I cannot speak for CBP - please understand I do not speak for the agency in any way, shape or form, but I would tell you that we have had one new bridge in the last 100 years, railroad bridge, and that is the West Bridge in... Brownsville. The bridge in Eagle Pass is built was 1926 or it was actually built in 1924, opened in 1926, it's over 100 years old. CBP has had the unpleasant duty of closing the port of Eagle Pass because of security reasons during the mass migrations. One of the things that Green Eagle brings to us is what we call the secure corridor. That 21-mile corridor from the Mexican side. They're right... the rail yard to the US side, they proposed to have X-rays at the Mexican yards, at the rail bridge, and at the US yards. This was pretty well in short, plus the fact that those trains once they leave the yard, do not stop. Your greatest security for a train is about 20 miles an hour. Nobody's going to jump on or jump off the train doing that kind of velocity, it's just not going to happen. The last thing I'd like to point out and without getting into all kinds... the reason it's called Green Eagle is I think the sponsors of this railroad

are very, very concerned about... the environmental impact. And so, from the day that if they started designing this thing and they were... they took that into consideration. But I again... I cannot the Port of Eagle Pass alone does right around \$8 to 9 billion worth of trade a year. With a double tracked rail right now the Port of Laredo does right around 1,000 rail cars a day - Eagle Pass will easily surpass that. It's a matter of capacity and how you move the cars back and forth. The fact that these cars do not stop, except at the designated rail, then that alone speaks a lot for the environment, not only the security, within the environmental. Thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:32:22.60

Up next, we have Crawford Rhoads. After that, we will have speaking, Jessie Fuentes, and then Jose Salazar, thank you.

Comment 3 – Crawford Rhoads 0:32:41.900

Good afternoon, my name is Crawford Rhoads and it's spelled C-R-A-W-F-O-R-D. Last name is Rhoads. I'm coming here as private person and there's one particular concern that we've got that's personal, and that's access. At the end of Doctor Gage Road, my family has a ranch that were close to the last 100 years, we've been crossing at that crossing. Whenever there's a train blocking the track, the way that we access our land is we go underneath the trestle, which is about 100 yards South of Doctor Gage Road. From what I'm hearing, it sounds like we're going to have, for lack of a better word, an Iron Curtain blocking everything from the river all the way past Doctor Gage Road. And of course, for us, that's a concern - we're not going to be able to get in, but I think it's another concern for the city at large. You know, the stated purpose for having this railroad is to remove the congestion out of the urban area, but the past... but if we put the railroad down Seco Creek, we're putting it right in the middle of an urban area. Right now, you know, there's farms to the north and there's some undeveloped plant the South, but we got some real estates all the way north - that's going to be developed some point. And if we don't have crossings across that, basically what we've done is we've recreated the problem that supposedly we're getting away from today. We got the railroad here, I think it was 18...1881. And in 1890, there were about 1,500 residents in Eagle Pass. And at that time, you know, probably for the 30s, 40s, and 50s, the railroad right close to Eagle Pass wasn't too much of an inconvenience because when the train was there, you went around it and when the train wasn't there, you just crossed it. We're not going to have that opportunity. We don't have any on-grade crossings to get over this railroad. We're going to have to invest 10s of millions of dollars in constructing flyovers. Now, we... at some point, you know, the 1950s are going to turn into the 60s and the 70s and 80s and we're going to look around and we're going to realize that having the railroad where it is, is going to be a bad solution. And it's going to be kicked onto the community to make those... expenditures to alleviate the probable cost of it. We think, or I think, that the railroad and the bridge are good concepts, but I think those things need to be moved farther North or some other place because right where it is, it's going to... it's just going to... we're planting the seed of the future congestions that we're going to have to spend a lot of money on. Thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:36:3.470

Mr. Fuentes, please.

Comment 4 – Jessie Fuentes 0:36:10.390

How do Transportation Board and welcome to Eagle Pass, Texas. My name is Jessie Fuentes. I am a member of the Eagle Pass Border Coalition and I'm also a small business owner. The name of my company is Epi's Canoe and Kayak. The purpose is to be on the river out there with individuals on the river, so I'm thankful that you're here as a NEPA situation. Welcome, and I'm going to quickly address my concerns about this particular problem. Over the last year or so, we've as a community witnessed the slow, systematic degradation and destruction of the Rio Grande ecosystem. Without any permitting, without any consultation of federal agencies that protect the river, we've had our state authorities go in there and bull-doze islands, spray chemicals on the edges that de-vegetate, and establish areas that were graded on the banks, they established water buoys, water barrels, concertina wire. They established shipping containers. They've established armed military from 13 different States and that is a genuine concern. The river is a stress river and basically, I'm looking for some help to address an environmental issue and the reason that I'm up here... to speak, I'm hoping that in this testimony that you will listen to and that you will read by what I submitted, that we, as a community, can relate to you the importance of making sure that the river is attended to. It is supposed to be a protected river, but right now it's under tremendous stress. This particular project that's being proposed is going to be set up between a dry creek bed and a wet creek bed, essentially on an island that is a flood zone. That is always prone to catastrophic amounts of water collecting. There is a reason why something is not built in this area at this time and why it hasn't been. And my biggest primary concern is that not even a mile from that particular point where Elm Creek and the Seco Creek meet the Rio Grande is the number one water source for the City of Eagle Pass and Maverick County. It is an intake valve where the citizens of this community receive all the portable water. My biggest concern is that there might be, because of this increased rail traffic and this insecurity in building structures on a flood zone, there might be a situation where we might get chemicals or some type of hazardous material into the river and there's absolutely no mitigation time between where they come in and out. And there's a study that's available by the city of Eagle Pass and the Texas Department of Water that says the Seco Creek is not a good area to build any structures because of the tremendous water force that floods there.

Stephanie Roberts 0:40:4.350

Thank you very much. Mr. Salazar, please. Up next after that, we'll be... are there any other speakers that were pre-registered via our board sponsored website that I missed? I'm sorry. Your name, miss?

Enriqueta Diaz 0:40:18.150

Enriqueta Diaz

Stephanie Roberts 0:40:20.130

You are next. You read my mind. You're right after Mr. Salazar. Mr. Salazar? Going once. OK, Ms. Diaz you are up. After that will be, [Name not recognizable] Torres, and after that will be Amerika Garcia.

Comment 5 - Enriqueta Diaz 0:40:50.430

I took the time to read, write down, so I could speak rapidly considering that I only have 3

minutes. My name is Enriqueta Diaz. My brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews' own property by the planned railroad line. I was raised in that area. I am the youngest of 16 children. My father was a coal miner and died after a vehicle accident while working in the coal mines. The property for the railway being considered has a long history and very close to the heart of the people in Seco Mines because, you know, the original workers in that area were coal miners. The Seco Creek is not a creek, but a regular drain and ditch from water overflow from water district and now... and a little bit rainwater too. I have been an advocate of this corruption and abuse of elected official over the residents and citizens of Eagle Pass and Maverick County for a long time. It took a lot of planning and organizing the community to get the county to pave the street, place sewer and water lighting, trash pickup, parks, etc. in the Seco Mines area to improve the life of the children in the families that live there. We also came together to the middle school from Eagle Pass Independent School District. Their school is the Seco Mines Elementary School which is right next to where you're planning to put this railroad line. A few years ago, a railroad car was returning from Mexico, and it was not properly cleaned and the fumes inside the railroad car caused an explosion right next to the International Bridge One. I was one of the victim that suffered torturing pain while I was being treated in San Antonio with burns in my mouth and my throat. For over 3 months, I was intubated not knowing whether I was going to live or die. There were approximately 70 to 80 persons that got hurt because nobody cared about our community. We were taken to San Antonio because our hospitals cannot cope with a disaster of that size. Eagle Pass was in chaos during that incident because our hospital and ambulance service is not prepared for that magnitude of a disaster. Our fire department is not big enough to service a major disaster. They do the best they can, but with limitations on how many people they can attend to at one time. Lawsuits were filed left and right and a lot of victims made a lot of money. Unfortunately, all the money in the world does not explain the medical problem that I still have to endure. I have to use my stomach to push my voice out. I have a problem that everybody thinks I'm yelling at them. Yes, I am very excited and very angry right now. My voice is much louder, but I have to speak with my stomach, and I keep getting people thinking I am yelling which I am not. I cannot speak on the side of my stomach and that has cost me a lot of chaos throughout my life and will for the rest of my life. It is a medical problem that I have to [Inaudible] the rest of my life. Why did this happen? Because in the political world, money talks and that happened all the way to the White House. I will ask you are you here to reconsider the concerns of the people or just to comply and rubber stamp policies and regulation. I say this because the majority of the people in the area who will be affected don't even know that this hearing is taking place. I am here on their behalf. I'm almost through.

Stephanie Roberts 0:44:41.780

I'm sorry ma'am we need to stop you now. I apologize, we have other folks that need to speak too.

Comment 5 - Enriqueta Diaz 0:44:42.270

Can I come back this afternoon, please?

Stephanie Roberts 0:44:47.490

Of course.

Comment 5 - Enriqueta Diaz 0:44:48.310

I will, thank you so much.

Stephanie Roberts 0:44:54.330

Next up is Jamie Kypceros and then Amerika Garcia. I'd also like to say that we are running short of time and this session, right now, it does end at 1:30. We will try to get through as many speakers as possible. We do invite people to, as Andrea said earlier, we do have comments boxes that people can make comments. You can leave an oral comment, as well. You can go through the STB website and also... you're invited to come back tonight. We are also be doing this again between 6:00 o'clock and 8:00 o'clock, and we will have a virtual online meeting next Tuesday between 6:00 o'clock and 8:00 o'clock and that is, again, a time that you can give oral comment even though it is in the virtual world, but it'll be the same format as this. So, I'd like to now invite and Jamie Kypceros up to speak. Thank you.

Audience

Audience asking for clarification on the last name

Stephanie Roberts: 0:45:45.10

Yes, did I just say that name horribly wrong? I'm so sorry.

Audience 0:45:48.10

Spell it.

Stephanie Roberts 0:45:52.380

K-Y-P-C-E-R-O-S. Oh, I'm so sorry.

Audience 0:46:1.790

I don't think he is here.

Stephanie Roberts 0:46:2.940

OK, OK, Amerika Garcia. After that will be Fred Casares, and then Eric Benavidez.

Comment 6 - Amerika Garcia 0:46:17.690

My name is Amerika Garcia Grewal, and I am here from Eagle Pass and I intended to yield time to my friend and neighbor, Jessie Fuentes. So, I'm going to read his prepared remarks but also add in some my own personal concerns here. One, is that we experienced a chemical spill here in Eagle Pass just a few days ago. And one of the hospitals had to be evacuated, roads were closed... And a big concern that I have about this location and looking at the maps is that it is directly above the water intake for the entire City of Eagle Pass. Another concern I have, and this is my own experience with the urban areas, is the elevated train. There are no at-grade crossings, which means that something is going to be in the air and the noise is going to go up

significantly in the neighborhoods. And with that, I'm going to continue my friend Jesse's comments. The City of Eagle Pass was designed and engineered to have all potential detrimental factors that might affect the areas on the city's only water supply to be built south of the only main water intake of the entire County. The Green Eagle Railway project, which will convert this area into an industrial style shipping and customs yard, will be dealing with vehicle and rail transportation of hazardous and volatile chemicals, will be less than a mile north of our precious city and County water intake valve - that sounds like a recipe for disaster. There was a flood study conducted in 2009 by an engineering firm out of San Antonio which specializes in the hydrology and hydraulic flows of Seco Creek. The results were not good for any structure within the confines of this particular area that is being considered for this project. So, that concludes Mr. Fuentes remarks and I have a map to submit to you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:48:2.550

Thank you very much. Fred Casares.

Comment 7 – Fred Casares 0:48:17.900

My name is Fred Casares and thank you for listening to me. My concern is that every morning, as you're coming into town or 8:00 o'clock in the morning, you have a long, long line of people waiting in their car or something coming into town. And to build a crossing, an overpass, or type of structure - it will create congestion. I believe that this railroad crossing should be further north of town. That's it, thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:49:7.250

Thank you. Next up, Mr. Benavidez and then after that, it's Sandra Catreras and again I apologize. If I'm saying anyone's name wrong. No? Oh my gosh, okay, Sandra Catreras. Catreras, pardon me. Uh, is Ms. Torres here? Is Javier Riojas here? Found one. Okay and then after that, Diana Hart.

Comment 8 – Javier Riojas 0:50:3.950

My name is Javier Riojas. I just wanted to raise some issues regarding whether the project sits in the interactive map. You identify the Rio Grande River as a wildlife habitat, but, you know, we recognize this Elm Creek and Seco Creek also as sustaining wildlife in our community. There is endangered species the [Inaudible] and the ocelot. And recently, I guess in litigation involving the coal mine, there was a lot of sightings on numerous sites of ocelots in the Elm Creek area and obviously we've got the Elm Creek area from the northern end of the project area in close proximity. So, the proposed vehicle traffic and the railroad hits in close proximity to Seco Creek and the proposed line is going to be fenced so, I think, that there needs to be, assuming that it's approved mitigation efforts, because that's going to obstruct the regular movement of wildlife. And obviously the ocelots [Inaudible] for you to see what habitat along the river and along those creeks. And there's thorny brush in that area. So, we want all that to be taken into account and so, if it's approved, there's a projection of a lot of increased traffic and there's noise and light and this wildlife is nocturnal. So, I guess there's a need for buffer zones between those creeks and building or place to do it further north away from the urban area. And Seco Mines in that area is coming very urbanized and it's going to continue to go in that direction. I guess there are some homes that I noticed, I guess, in the area between Del Rio and Herring and I believe it's Barrera and Seco Creek that may be affected. If there's going to be eminent domain, I mean,

there's people here that spend their whole life working to build their homes, it would be wrong to just pay only something and say hey, move it. I mean, I think if that is going to turn, they should be moved. [Inaudible]. I mean they shouldn't be buying new homes in the golden years, because there's not enough compensation to buy a new home now that the prices have mushroomed. And, I guess, also during the incident with the coal mine, those were Native American remains, that were uncovered. But that could happen. I mean, the Native Americans historically used the areas along the creeks as campsites and [inaudible] sites because of the water and that could happen also with Seco Creek and the areas along Elm Creek and I know it happened further up during the coal mining phase and obviously, other reasons that people have braved that I just read or read and put in the city water plant and the effects of the... from discharges into those creeks.

Stephanie Roberts 0:53:41.870

Thank you. Next is Diana Hart and after that is Rolando Salinas.

Comment 9 – Diana Hart 0:53:51.400

My name is Diana Hart. I have a... I guess, too many concerns. Hazardous material coming through... or going to Mexico crossing through Eagle Pass. And the other concern would be the revenue that is generated - who will be the sole owner of this revenue? Does Eagle Pass have any access to this revenue? There will be money generated so that would be a concern that I feel like Eagle Pass should own this project. If we have to pay for the project somehow, along, you know, throughout the years, but eventually it should be owned by your [inaudible] and Maverick County whoever decides. But basically, that's it, thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 0:54:52.120

Thank you. Rolando Salinas, and then after that is someone who signed their name Ramsey with no last name. So, you know who you are.

Comment 10– Rolando Salinas 0:55:2.370

Good afternoon, my name is Rolando Salinas and the Mayor of the City of Eagle Pass. We welcome you to this beautiful city. I knew we have numerous concerns regarding this project and let me start off with the environmental concern that I had. This railroad bridge is projected to go through a residential subdivision, which is Bass subdivision - very close to some very nice homes. Some of these people aren't even aware, they just bought homes there, they're not even aware that they're going to have a railroad bridge adjacent to their homes. They're building new houses - they're not aware of this project, so I'm glad we're having this so that we can spread awareness of this. The proposed rail right there - it's a very busy area, it's an urbanized area. I've heard a lot of thoughts saying that well, there's already a rail that goes through the city. Yes, there is, and that has caused a concern for the city, but I haven't heard Union Pacific, who manages that rail, I haven't heard of any agreement of them saying that they're going to stop using that rail or any agreement. So this would create two... another rail in the community and just additional traffic, additional noise, it's going to displace people that live on Bass subdivision and on Barrera, you have an elementary school there – so, there's just a lot of concerns. I know why this is being built because it's going to be very profitable. This is a profitable, a private investment, and that's who's going to benefit from this. Because when we talk about alleviating the traffic, right now, the city of Eagle Pass has two bridges. Those bridges

are being used at 50% capacity. Right now, from the Mexican side, they're working on a huge project and expanding the bridge, and so far, is a city... in Eagle Pass. We are expanding, realigning, aligning the bridge to add more lanes to make traffic go and flow better. So, the city, because when we were getting this presentation and we take the project in its totality, it's going to lose a lot of money. The city's budget depends on commercial traffic that this project basically wants to obtain all that commercial traffic because it's very profitable. But the city depends on us paying for services with those moneys so, we will be impacted, not only the environment which is... it'll be imminent, but also the economy. Looking at one of the things, socioeconomics, the way we can provide funding for the Community, as far as fire, the police... is through the money generated by bridge #2. A bridge that we're putting a lot of money... investing a lot of money from that bridge. So, I myself, I'm against this project because, as it stands right now, the city doesn't benefit. I understand that there's been an ad campaign and there's going to be still numerous campaigns saying how this benefits the city, but it's just throwing out projections and it's nothing that's said in writing. I know they have... they hired experts to say how much money this will generate for the City, but we all know that anyone can hire an expert to say anything. So, it's just... as it stands right now, it will be having a negative effect on the environment and the economy of the city of Eagle Pass.

Stephanie Roberts 0:58:44.660

Thank you. We have three more speakers. Next is Mr. Ramsey, after that will be Juanita Martinez, and lastly, George Baxter.

Comment 11– Ramsey English Cantu 0:58:58.940

Thank you, my name is Ramsey English Cantu. If you didn't catch on the last name, I am the County Judge here in Maverick County and it is of course my honor to be here to discuss this project knowing, of course, the importance of what this project is, not only from an economic standpoint, but more so from the safety, of course, that this meeting will bring out a portion of the residents of the concerns of noting the importance of what those issues are that they'll raise and what it is that we need to do to make sure that our residents' needs and concerns are being met. Here today, specifically, I want to thank, of course, the Surface Transportation Board and Ms. Poole for all the work you are doing here specifically with this Environmental Impact Statement that is being done. The question, of course, and right now is... as my colleague, the mayor, has brought up and referenced to the concerns on the railroad crossings within the city, those are currently 8 - they're currently within the city of Eagle Pass. Since my time serving as mayor 15 years back, we've been trying to initiate what are quiet zones. What are opportunities for the excessive traffic and the safety concerns for ramp traffic as they have been mentioned in other testimonies that have been given here today specifically. Those are all concerns that are going through the City of Eagle Pass. As a former mayor, a former council member [Inaudible], former Mayor and now as County Judge, overseeing the entire county I know and have experienced what are the many dangers that of having regular private POV traffic and, of course, commercial truck traffic coinciding together. Just recently this past week, two weeks ago roughly, we had an accident that occurred off Veterans Blvd of heavy traffic that caused a major HAZMAT concern for this community. Those are the issues that I believe that this project will actually assist in by making sure that we can address those concerns from that aid perspective of safety for our residents. That however, of course, is also... what is of great concern is to make sure that the residents of the hotel area. Those individuals who live behind this area and this is subject in question, approximately 800 families more so... I have 800 households that are there for precisely that we need to address and make sure that they have the necessary exit

plans for them. That is Maverick County's issue in order to make sure that this is... that the project puts in also, the residents and the community are not adversely affected within this particular issue. Hearing, of course, of the concerns of the ownership of the project and things of that nature, there are ongoing negotiations for that and discussions on this project, which at that point... in my opinion, with the necessary request that they made the City of Eagle Pass, to come to the table and to negotiate so that there is not an adverse effect to the citizens of Eagle Pass and the budgets that are currently being adhered too. So, as we oversee this this entire project, I think that right now, the City and the County, we all need to work together on that but more so, we need to make sure that right now from this point that our residents' concerns are heard here today in order to make sure that there is an informed decision on the best possible solutions for those issues that are being raised here in this particular week. So, on behalf of the Commissioners Court, we thank you all for being here present and for taking our residents' concerns seriously, thank you.

Stephanie Roberts 1:2:24.350

Thank you, your Honor. Next, we'd like to have Juanita Martinez. Okay, then last we have George Baxter.

Comment 12– George Baxter 1:2:56.900

Yes, my name is George Baxter. I am a resident of Hopedale and we live too close to the proposed Puerto Verde Bridges. We don't oppose the concept of a 3rd bridge, but we do oppose it in the location proposed by Puerto Verde and the main reason for that is our threat to our drinking water. A sole source of portable water for more than 90% of the population of Eagle Pass and Maverick County, more than 50,000 people is the Eagle Pass Water Works

System. The system draws 100% of its water from the Rio Grande at the water intake that is at the north end of Eagle Pass. Unlike the existing three bridges that are downriver of the water intake, Puerto Verde bridges will be upriver of the intake only about a mile and 1/2 away. In the event of a fuel spill or a hazardous material spill during the construction or during operational bridges, our water supply would be shut down. This presents an unacceptable risk to the people of Maverick County. Recent destruction to the bridge in Baltimore is a prime example that catastrophic accidents do happen. Likewise, the train derailment and hazardous chemical spill in East Palestine, Ohio a year ago, when nearly a thousand derailments every year in the United States. I'll point to the fact that if a spill had taken place on the Puerto Verde Bridge, our system would have been shut down for weeks or months. An 18-Wheeler accident as such was referenced a few minutes ago on the highway bridge would create a similar disaster. We cannot live with the constant threat to our water supply 24/7, 365 merely hoping that nothing goes wrong. Let's take action to prevent this from happening. First option is to move Puerto Verde bridges downriver of the water intake. This would involve a crossing south of Eagle Pass in southern part of [inaudible] 480. The second option is to move the Eagle Pass Water Works, at least the water intake, upriver of this bridge. If this option is taken, the SPD should require Puerto Verde to pay 100% of the cost for this project and the relocation must be completed before construction of Puerto Verde bridges can begin.

Stephanie Roberts 1:5:37.220

Thank you. We have a slight transcribing error. So, I would like to invite Juanita Martinez up to... the podium, thank you.

Comment 13– Juanita Martinez 1:5:51.280

Somebody said she said... something, Martinez. Anyway, I am Juanita Martinez, I am the Democratic Party chair. And the reason I stood up earlier is because our mayor was speaking, and he is voicing a lot of concerns of the community. He represents the community, and I thought it was a little rude not to let... have a little bit of extra time, however, I'm just a Democratic chair so I'll stick to the time allotted. But for next time, I think somebody like our mayor should be given a little extra time. Now there are a lot of concerns - it's very confusing and very frustrating for our community that something like this is happening and there are a lot of questions out there. Who is economically, how is this going to impact the city financially, our taxpayer money? How? Who is benefiting from this project and who made it possible? What officials here made it possible for this company to benefit without any consideration to the benefits to the Community? If the elected officials are supposed to be representing the county, representing our best interests - the interest of the county residents... county, the interest of the city residents? There's a lot of questions out there - the community wants to know. On behalf of the Community, because I do speak for a lot of them, and recently, they were very young when they spoke at an election, so, that's our questions. That's the concerns of the community so that you don't see here. But there are questions to be answered. And if you all will do that, that would be great. Thank you very much.

Stephanie Roberts 1:8:9.410

Thank you very much. Is there anyone at this time who either we did not call their name or would like to come up and make a 3-minute comment? Thank you very much everyone.