

Adam Assenza
OEA Project Manager
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 36815
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Adam,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the construction and operation of a rail line so close to County 7410 Road 252, Burnet, TX 78605. This project poses a significant environmental threat to the area and would have serious consequences for both local wildlife and residents.

The Facts:

- Texas Materials Group, a subsidiary of a Dublin, Ireland-based company—not even a Texas or U.S. company—has proposed constructing a 26.9-mile rail line from Burnet to Lampasas to transport rock aggregates from local quarries.
- Their plan involves rebuilding 12.5 miles of an abandoned rail line from the 1950s and adding 14.4 miles of new track, cutting directly through private properties.
- Much of the old right-of-way land has been sold back to landowners, meaning the company may not even own the full 12.5-mile stretch it intends to reconstruct.
- The proposed train would be 6,400 feet long, consisting of 120 cars and four diesel locomotives, with an estimated 1.64 trains traveling the route per day.

The Problems:

Land Rights and Use:

- Over 118 homes will be directly affected, with the rail line either running through their properties or coming uncomfortably close—some within just 200-300 feet.
- Many properties will be divided, rendering portions of the land unusable.
- Homeowners never expected to deal with the noise, pollution, and disruption that this rail project will bring.
- Although marketed as a **public** rail line, it will be used almost exclusively for private business operations.

Property Values:

- Property values are expected to decline significantly—by **50% to 75%**, based on similar past cases.

- Many homeowners will struggle to sell their properties due to the undesirable proximity of the train.
- Given current high interest rates, relocation is financially impossible for many, particularly retirees and elderly residents.

Safety Issues:

- Train accidents, derailments, hazardous material spills, and fire risks pose serious concerns. Just recently, a fire started near Highway 29 due to a passing train—what happens when a fire ignites in remote countryside areas with no immediate response?
- Livestock is at risk of being injured or killed by the train, as well as straying onto roads or neighboring properties.
- The lack of fencing along the track means anyone can freely access the rail line and trespass onto private properties.
- The proposed rail line crosses up to **eight county roads**, potentially blocking access to emergency services. In a medical emergency, delays caused by a stopped train could be life-threatening, especially for elderly residents and children.

Environmental Concerns:

- The rail line threatens the habitat of the **Golden-Cheeked Warbler**, a federally protected endangered bird native to the Hill Country.
- The **Balcones Canyonlands**, a **27,500-acre wildlife refuge**, was established specifically to protect this species and is located just 10 miles away.
- Despite claims that an environmental impact assessment is being conducted, there has been **no public input** and **no known requests** for land access to properly assess the impact.

Lack of Transparency:

- Landowners were **only notified last week**, giving them little time to respond—meanwhile, the company has had **years** to plan.
- With a deadline of **April 3rd** for public comments, this is a blatant violation of due process rights.

The Bottom Line:

- This rail project **only benefits a private company** transporting and selling private products.
- The **public gains nothing**—only losses in property value, safety, and quality of life.

I urge you to take immediate action to halt this project and advocate for alternative solutions that prioritize environmental protection and community well-being. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue further and hear your position on the matter.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent concern. I look forward to your response.

Matthew Hricko



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