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Subject: Formal Rebuttal of Texas Materials Group Rail Proposal on Environmental Grounds

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed rail project by Texas Materials Group in Burnet and Lampasas Counties due to its significant and irreversible environmental impacts. This project threatens the delicate ecological balance of our region and poses substantial risks to our local wildlife, water resources, and overall environmental health.

Impact on Local Ecosystems and Wildlife

Burnet County is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including several species of concern. The Blackfoot Daisy, shown in the attached image, is just one of the potentially impacted floras that is already diminishing. Further, the construction and operation of this rail line would lead to habitat destruction, fragmentation, and increased mortality rates for local wildlife. The increased noise, vibration, and pollution from rail traffic will disrupt nesting and breeding patterns of birds, including protected species such as the bald eagle and golden-cheeked warbler, which have been observed in the area.

Threats to Water Quality, Aquatic Life, and Cattle

The proposed rail line's proximity to local creeks, more specifically Mesquite Creek as shown in the attached image, watersheds, and aquifers raises serious concerns regarding water contamination. The runoff from construction activities and potential fuel spills from train operations could introduce harmful pollutants into our waterways, endangering aquatic ecosystems and affecting drinking water supplies. The long-term consequences of such contamination would be detrimental not only to the environment but also to public health and agricultural sustainability in our community. Additionally, the proposed route would inhibit our ranching abilities by shutting off access to our key water source.

Endangered Species Threat

The proposed rail line threatens habitat critical to the federally endangered golden-cheeked warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*). The golden-cheeked warbler relies on mature Ashe juniper and oak woodlands for breeding. The proposed rail line would destroy nesting habitat, fragmenting one of the few remaining areas suitable for the species in Burnet and Lampasas Counties.

Air and Noise Pollution Concerns

The increased rail traffic will generate significant amounts of air pollution from diesel-powered locomotives, contributing to higher levels of particulate matter and greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the continuous noise and vibrations from rail operations would negatively impact both residents and wildlife, disrupting natural behaviors and degrading the quality of life in our rural community.

For the reasons outlined above, I strongly urge the STB to deny this rail proposal. The long-term environmental damage far outweighs any potential economic benefits. Instead, I encourage the exploration of alternative transportation solutions that do not come at the cost of our natural heritage and public well-being. I appreciate your time and consideration of these serious environmental concerns.

Sincerely,

Ronny Shroyer

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Shroyer Family Ranch, LLC



Blackfoot Daisy



Mesquite Creek



Mesquite Creek



Old Alexander Cemetery (also in the potential path)