



RE: STD Docket No. FD 35852 

David Navecky to: Mary Hillberg

10/13/2015 10:14 AM

From: David Navecky/STB
To: "Mary Hillberg" <hillberg@earthlink.net>

Mary -

Regarding your questions:

Question 1 - "Were the AF route by the Larkin Group to be excluded for whatever reason, would that mean the STB would be forced to endorse one of the other 2 routes under consideration?"

Answer - The STB's Office Of Environmental Analysis (OEA) typically identifies a preferred alternative at the Final EIS stage. Identifying OEA's preferred alternative at the Final EIS stage allows it to consider comments on the Draft EIS, including comments from federal, state and local agencies, the public, and other interested parties on the potential preferred alternative. Therefore, whether we have one, two, three or more alternatives in the Draft EIS, including the no-action alternative, they are treated equally in the Draft EIS without preference, or in your terms, an endorsement.

Question 2 - "...is it possible for the STB to choose the NO ACTION alternative? Have you ever recommended that alternative?"

The Final EIS is not the decision making document. Rather, the Final EIS is intended to inform the decision makers (in the STB's case, the three Board members) of the potential environmental impacts of constructing and operating a proposed rail line. The Final EIS typically identifies OEA's preferred project alternative and recommends that the Board select that alternative if it decides to grant final approval of the project. Generally speaking, OEA could recommend that the proposed project be denied based on potential environmental impacts (i.e., recommend that the Board approve the no-action alternative). However, I do not recall an instance when OEA made such a recommendation. In making its final decision on the project, the Board members will consider the transportation merits of the proposed project and the entire environmental record including public comments.

Thanks,

Dave

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