

To Whom it may concern:

Per 42 U.S.C.4331(a).Section 102 of NEPA, The Office of Environmental Analysis on behalf of the Surface Transportation Board is required to perform an Environmental Impact Statement to address my following concerns about the very unnecessary rail proposed by Texas Materials that butts through the middle of the beautiful Texas Hill Country of both Brunet and Lampasas Counties.

I have many environmental concerns regarding Texas Materials, a private company, proposing to construct a 27-mile railway through family-owned small ranches in Burnet and Lampasas counties. My primary concern is the impact on our 600-acre family ranch, which would be divided by the railway, with the potential for train operations running adjacent to our homestead.

This proposed railway, situated near Mesquite Creek, poses a significant threat to our groundwater resources, which are essential for the region. The route traverses both the Edwards and Trinity recharge zones, and these aquifers serve as the primary sources of groundwater for the Texas Hill Country, holding ecological, cultural, and economic importance for the state.

Additionally, I am worried about noise pollution in both cities of Lampasas and Kempner. Texas Materials plans to operate a minimum of 2 to 4 trains daily, which would not only increase noise levels but also contribute to air pollution due to the dust and debris stirred up by the trains. Furthermore, the presence of the railway raises substantial fire risks for the surrounding area.

Another ecological concern is the fragmentation and habitat loss for the Golden-Cheeked Warbler, an endangered species that inhabits these ranches. It is also habitat for many other species of birds, such as the Red-tailed Hawk, Crested Cara Cara, and Great Horned Owls. The proposed railway corridor encompasses a prime habitat for these birds. Additionally, by following the Mesquite Creek, the development threatens numerous spring-fed sections that have existed for centuries, as well as valuable Native American artifacts that would be at risk should the railway be constructed along the proposed route.

Overall, this plan raises significant concerns regarding its environmental impact, primarily aimed at enhancing profits for a private company that currently transports rock by truck. The company's approach appears to overlook the potential consequences for the environment and the hundreds of families that may be affected by the acquisition of land along the proposed 27-mile route.

Other irreversible effects on our cherished land are the following. First, the proposed line threatens to destroy a centuries-old pecan bottom, home to hundreds of pecan trees lovingly grafted by my grandfather in the 1960s and 1970s. Second, due to the topography, this proposed line would effectively sever our west pastures, robbing us of access to invaluable grazing lands. I've been informed that once the rail is in place, it will be fenced off, leaving us cut off from the land on the other side, with no county roads to reach it. Third, our land is rich with historical features, including an old mine that tells part of the captivating Legend of Sam Bass. Additionally, we hold the only access to an old family cemetery located on adjacent property, which is also being divided by the proposed rail, encroaching alarmingly close to this sacred resting place. I am sure there are many more that I can list, but this is a small start.

If this rail moves forward as proposed, it will be an irreversible commitment that will tragically devastate both Burnet and Lampasas Counties, while also robbing over 185 ranches of their

cherished land along the 27-mile route. This land is breathtaking—lush, green, and adorned with rolling hills that cradle vital spring-fed creeks, crucial for our watersheds and numerous endangered species. I implore you to consider a full Environmental Impact Study. I am confident it will reveal that this rail is not an essential project and that there are far better alternatives for transporting rock from these quarries through the beautiful Hill Country. We must protect the integrity and beauty of this natural habitat for all residents of the area, both human and animal alike, aligning with the noble national policy set forth by the National Environmental Policy Act: “to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.”

Thank you all for your diligent efforts in conducting a thorough EIS and uncovering the truth that this proposed rail is an unnecessary project put forth by a private, international company, prioritizing profit over the well-being of the citizens and landowners in the United States.

Sincerely,

Cathy Kuehne
Lampasas City Council Member &
Family Heir to the Haby Ranch, Burnet County