



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

November 16, 2020

Craig Potts, Executive Director
and State Historic Preservation Officer
Kentucky Heritage Council
The Barstow House
410 High Street
Frankfort, KY 40601

RE: Docket No. FD 36328, Ken Tenn Regional Rail Partners, Inc.—Construction and Operation Exemption—In Fulton County, Ky. and Obion County, Tenn.; Request for modifications to area of potential effects and field survey methods for archaeological resources; KHC #57096-9

Dear Mr. Potts:

On behalf of the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA), I am writing to request two modifications to the area of potential effects (APE) and field survey methods for archaeological or below-ground resources, as outlined in our October 14, 2020 initial concurrence request letter and your concurrence approval letter of November 9, 2020, as detailed below.

Based on recent visits to the project area by Travis Hurdle of Cultural Resources Analysts, Inc. (CRA) as well as engineering refinements to the right-of-way of both alternative routes—Alternative 1 and Alternative 7 (KTRRP's Preferred route)—OEA has confirmed that the construction limit of disturbance for most of the rail line right-of-way would be confined to approximately 100 to 150 feet in total width rather than the originally approved 300-foot total. For staging areas where the total width may need to be expanded beyond 100 to 150 feet, we propose to align the APE with the expanded staging limit of disturbance. Accordingly, the 300-foot total width, as measured from 150-feet on either side of the centerline of the right-of-way, would be reduced to 50 to 75 feet on either side of the centerline of the rail line right-of-way but expanded where necessary to include the limit of disturbance for staging areas.

In addition, we believe that pedestrian surveys may suffice in areas along abandoned and previously disturbed railroad right-of-way, as well as several recently harvested agricultural fields. The abandoned segments comprise approximately 1.3 miles along the Alternative 1 route and approximately 1.0 miles along the Alternative 7 route. For these areas, we believe that systematic shovel testing is not necessary and instead propose to conduct a pedestrian walkover

so long as surface visibility is greater than 50 percent. If visibility is not greater than 50 percent, we intend to conduct the systematic shovel testing.

Both approaches are consistent with the coverage and visibility methods for phase I archaeological surveys described in Section IV of the *Specifications for Conducting Fieldwork and Preparing Cultural Resource Assessment Reports* issued by the Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office's Site Protection Program in March 1991 and revised in 2001, 2006 and 2017.

We understand that you have 30 days to respond to this request but would appreciate very much your concurrence with the suggested modifications to the APE and scope of field survey work at your earliest convenience. We note that the Tennessee Historical Commission approved this same request for both alternatives traversing the Tennessee segment. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Alan Tabachnick at 202-245-0367 or by email at Alan.Tabachnick@stb.gov or Diana Wood at 202-245-0302 or by email at Diana.Wood@stb.gov. Thank you for your valuable assistance.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis

Cc: Nicolas Laracuente, Kentucky Heritage Council
Vanessa N. Hanvey, Kentucky Heritage Council
Gabrielle Hernandez, Kentucky Heritage Council