



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
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E1-18267

August 9, 2010

Troy Brady  
Surface Transportation Board  
Attn: Docket No. FD 35141  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Mr. Brady:

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has completed a review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the US Rail Corporation, Construction and Operation Exemption, Brookhaven Rail Terminal (Docket No. 35141, July 26, 2010). The State Resource Conservationist and reviewing Resource Planning Staff concur with the Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis finding that the proposed construction and operation of approximately 3.4 miles of new rail line and an associated rail transfer facility will not result in significant environmental impacts to the site and immediately surrounding areas within the Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, NY. This determination included a review of the Project's potential effects upon ongoing NRCS programmatic activities currently underway in Suffolk County.

The State Resource Conservationist also endorses the mitigation measures included in the "Stipulation of Settlement" and those additionally proposed by the Board to minimize potential cumulative environmental impacts from site activities. The mitigation measures identified in the EA are consistent with the NRCS's mission to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources through prudent land use practices. Construction best management practices for erosion control and storm water management will greatly reduce surface water impacts originating from construction site disturbances. The spill, prevention, control and countermeasures plan and stormwater management plan for site operations will insure protection of the underlying Nassau-Suffolk Sole Source Aquifer. Retention of remnant native vegetation from the Atlantic Coastal Pine Barrens Community along with supplemental plantings of native vegetation will minimize net loss of existing transitional habitat for resident wildlife species and may aid the survival of migratory birds as these species move through the area on their annual trips to and from northern nesting habitats.

Recognizing that the vegetative mitigations identified in the EA are not yet fully designed, please consider the following opportunities to improve the successful establishment, long term survival, and future functional value of these on-site communities.

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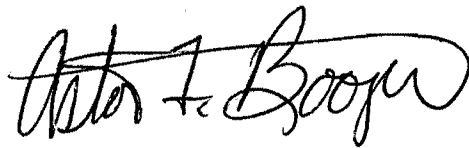
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- 1) Retention of remnant pine bush communities can be improved by removing invasive exotic tree and shrub species during the landscaping activities to be conducted in other areas of the site.
- 2) Successful establishment of native vegetation in the landscaping areas adjacent to Sills Road can be improved with a prescribed maintenance and replacement plan extending 3 to 5 years from initial planting.
- 3) Advice on native species selection, planting densities, and seed mixtures can be obtained from NRCS botanists and agronomists at the Big Flats Plant Materials Center in Corning, NY. Additional information and guidance on selecting vegetative species native to the Atlantic Coastal Pine Barrens Ecoregion can found on the NRCS plants database <http://plants.usda.gov/>.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the EA and please don't hesitate to contact my office if the NRCS can be of further assistance to the Board's environmental review efforts on this project.

Respectfully,



Astor F. Boozer  
State Conservationist

Cc: Edward Henry, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS Syracuse NY

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