



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration

November 18, 2003

Mr. Jeffrey Moreno
Mr. Michael Higgins
Thompson Hine LLP
1920 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-1600

Re: STB Finance Docket 34421, HolRail, LLC - Construction and Operation
Exemption - In Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties, South Carolina

Dear Messrs. Moreno and Higgins:

Pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.10(c), we are granting your request of October 28, 2003 for a waiver of the six-month prefiling notice generally required for construction projects under 49 CFR 1105.10(a)(1).

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) met with you and Michael Higgins of Thompson Hine, and Jeffrey Brehmer, Brian Smith, Looman Stingo and Robert West of Holcim, Inc. (representing HolRail or applicant) on October 14, 2003. At the meeting, it was explained that HolRail would seek authority from the Board to construct and operate an approximately 2-mile rail line in Orangeburg and Dorchester counties, South Carolina (SC). The line would connect Holcim's Holly Hill cement production facility with an existing Norfolk Southern Railway Company rail line, and provide the facility with access to a second rail carrier.

The majority of the preferred route is located parallel to and within the right-of-way (ROW) or corridor of an existing CSX Transportation (CSX) rail line, which currently provides rail service to the Holly Hill facility. Although much of the preferred route would occur in wetlands and require several stream crossings, Holcim believes that by placing the preferred route within the CSX rail line corridor, wetland and waterway impacts would be reduced.

If construction of the proposed rail line within the CSX corridor is not feasible, an alternative route has been developed by the applicant. This route would also parallel the CSX corridor but would be offset to the east by approximately 50 yards. Unlike the preferred route, this alternative would require the clearing of forests and wetlands along the new ROW.

At the October 14, 2003 meeting, SEA also provided a general overview of the Board's environmental review process, SEA's role in the process, and the use of third-party consultants.

Based on the information from this initial meeting, SEA believes that it has adequate information and the applicant is sufficiently aware of the environmental process to grant this request. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Dave Navecky of my staff at 202-565-1593.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson".

Victoria Rutson

Chief

Section of Environmental Analysis