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***SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423***

Office of Environmental Analysis

June 2, 2015

Jefferson Keel
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Chickasaw Nation

RE: STB Finance Docket No. 35802, Northwest Tennessee Regional Port Authority—Rail Construction and Operation—in Lake County, Tennessee:
Request for Information and Comments on Proposed 5.5 Mile Rail Line to serve the Port of Cates Landing

Dear Mr. Keel,

I am writing you to request your comments regarding the proposed construction and operation of a new line of railroad in Lake County, Tennessee. The Northwest Tennessee Regional Port Authority (NWTRPA) has filed a petition before the Surface Transportation Board (the Board) to construct and operate approximately 5.5 miles of rail line near the recently constructed Port of Cates Landing on the Mississippi, north of Tiptonville, Tennessee. The Board is an independent agency within the United States Department of Transportation that has jurisdiction over railroad construction and operations. As part of its licensing process, the Board is conducting an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and an historic review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Our research indicates that the Chickasaw Nation may have historical connections to the project area and may have knowledge regarding properties of traditional, religious, and cultural significance in the Area of Potential Effect.

Pursuant to NEPA, Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act, and the Board's environmental rules (49 CFR 1105), the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) is preparing an environmental document that evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed rail construction project and the reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposal.

Description of the Proposed Rail Project

NWTRPA is a political subdivision that has been established by the counties of Dyer, Lake, and Obion in northwest Tennessee for the purpose of owning, constructing, and operating a regional river port facility in Lake County, Tennessee. On June 27, 2014, NWTRPA filed a petition with the Board, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502, for authority to construct approximately 5.5 miles of new railroad line that would connect an existing rail line near Tiptonville, Tennessee to the site of a newly constructed port facility on the Mississippi River at Cates Landing (see the attached map which shows the location of the proposed rail line as proposed by NWTRPA). If the proposed rail line is constructed, NWTRPA intends to enter into a contract with an existing short line railroad to provide common carrier service to customers located at the port and at an adjacent

industrial park currently under development in conjunction with the port.

The proposed rail line would begin at an intersection with the existing Tennken Railroad near Tiptonville, Tennessee and would extend to the northwest in the direction of the port. Approximately three miles from the connection with the existing railroad, the proposed rail line would bisect the proposed Lake County Industrial Park. Approximately 2.5 miles northwest of the Industrial Park, the line would enter the campus of the Port of Cates Landing and would parallel the port's slack water harbor to the main dock facility. The rail right-of-way would primarily cross open farm land and could cross as many as two public roads.

The proposed rail line would be used to transport shipments of agricultural products, as well as industrial and energy commodities and products. Once the port facility and the adjacent industrial park are fully developed, NWTRPA anticipates that the rail line would also transport raw materials for industrial products, finished manufactured goods, agricultural commodities and products, and special cargoes. NWTRPA predicts that rail traffic on the line would initially consist of fewer than 1,000 carloads annually, but would eventually increase to more than 1,000 carloads annually as the port facility and industrial park becomes fully developed.

Request for Comments

At this time, I request your preliminary comments regarding the proposed rail project. Any information you provide will assist OEA in making its final recommendations to the Board. We expect that the Draft EA will be made available to the public in July 2015. If you are interested in receiving a hard copy of the Draft EA, please contact Josh Wayland of my staff at 202-245-0330 (email: waylandj@stb.dot.gov) or Brian Yates of EnSafe, Inc., OEA's independent third party contractor in this case, at 901-372-7962 (email: byates@ensafe.com). You can also submit comments and responses by mail to the following address:

EnSafe, Inc.
Attn: Brian Yates
5724 Summer Trees Drive
Memphis, Tennessee 38134

I appreciate your assistance on this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Josh Wayland at the number above. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson".

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis