

Finding Of No Significant Impact

**Project RRS-8817(1)
SHEFFIELD RAILROAD RELOCATION
WEST OF TUSCUMBIA TO EAST OF U.S. 43
Colbert County, Alabama**

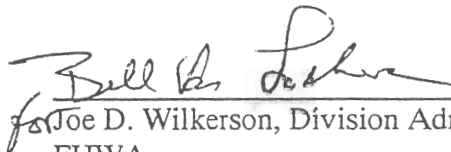
Prepared by:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
And
Alabama Department of Transportation

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA)
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
FOR
Project RRS-8817(1)
SHEFFIELD RAILROAD RELOCATION
WEST OF TUSCUMBIA TO EAST OF U.S. 43
Colbert County, Alabama

The FHWA has determined that this project will have no significant impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on the attached EA which has been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA.

6-18-03
Date


for Joe D. Wilkerson, Division Administrator,
FHWA

FORWARD

The environmental assessment (EA) for project RRS-8817(1) was approved by the Federal Highway Administration on May 9, 2001. The proposed action involves the relocation of a portion of the Norfolk Southern Railroad on a new corridor outside of downtown Sheffield and the Tri-Cities area. The Tri-Cities area includes the towns the Sheffield, Tuscumbia, and Muscle Shoals. The project is located entirely within Colbert County, Alabama which is located in the northwest portion of the state, bordering Mississippi and is approximately 140 miles north-northwest of Birmingham. This section of the Norfolk Southern Railroad is part of the mainline between Memphis and Birmingham.

The proposed project will serve to improve the level of service at several at-grade railroad crossings in the towns of Sheffield, Tuscumbia, and Muscle Shoals by relocating the main line tracks outside of town. The proposed action is intended to relieve traffic congestion in the Shoals area and increase safety at the railroad crossings.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) held citizen involvement meetings on March 15, 1994, October 20, 1994 and again on December 2, 1999. The meetings were attended by approximately 92, 32, and 191 people respectively. A summary of the meetings is included in the EA.

RATIONALE FOR THE CHOSEN ALTERNATIVE

Alternatives Considered

Alternatives considered in the Environmental Assessment include the No Action Alternative, the Mass Transit Alternative, the Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative and the Build Alternative.

Alternatives Considered but Not Selected

The Sheffield project number RRS-8817 (1) initially began as a proposal to construct grade separated crossings at Montgomery Avenue and Atlanta Avenue over the existing Norfolk Southern railroad tracks in downtown Sheffield. These alternatives were advanced, along with the relocation alternative in a feasibility study completed in March of 1999.

Rationale for the Chosen Alternative

A number of public involvement meetings were conducted to receive public comments on the proposed. After consideration of the costs, environmental impacts, public comments and comments from the Norfolk Southern Corporation, the proposed relocation of the downtown railroad line to the south through Tuscumbia was selected as the Preferred Build Alternative. The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments and the Shoals Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) support the proposed relocation alternative as the preferred alternative with the least adverse impact to the surrounding community and its responsiveness to the congestion and delay problems in the downtown area.

THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternatives considered in the Environmental Assessment included the options discussed above. Based on the comments received from citizens, review agencies, and the results of the environmental analysis, the preferred alternative has remained unchanged. A description of the preferred alternative is provided below and on page 2-2 of the environmental assessment, including graphical representation.

The build alternative represents a proposal to relocate a section of the Norfolk Southern mainline from downtown Sheffield to an area near Tuscumbia in Colbert County, Alabama. The proposed realignment of the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks will depart from the existing railroad line west of Tuscumbia; turn southeast toward Frankfort Road; then east, paralleling an existing power transmission line to a point west of the Jackson Highway/U.S. 43; then crossing the Jackson Highway; and converging with the existing Norfolk Southern line south of Muscle Shoals. The relocated mainline track will be approximately 11.4 kilometers (7.1 miles) in length and will include both single and double track.

The proposed relocation alternative will include a double section of track between Frankfort Road and Old Jackson Highway for a distance of 2.7 kilometers (1.7 miles). This section track will be used as a siding for slower moving trains. The width of the right-of-way (ROW) for the relocated mainline track will vary from 45 meters (148 feet) to 76 meters (260 feet). All new public road crossings will be grade-separated.

In addition, the Build Alternative includes a proposal to construct a second set of tracks along the existing tracks leading north to downtown Sheffield. This parallel track will be approximately 900 meters (2,952 feet) in length **beginning at** the existing railroad crossing of Spring Creek and ending north of the current U.S. Highway 72 underpass. This second track will serve as a siding for downtown Sheffield train traffic. This siding is **mandated** by the proposed removal of the existing track approaching the downtown area from the west. No additional rights-of-way will be required for this second set of tracks.

Although the refueling facility and the switching yard located in downtown Sheffield will be abandoned as part of the project, the final decision to abandon these facilities will be made by the Norfolk Southern Railroad Corporation sometime in the future. At this time, it is anticipated that the track on the west side of Sheffield and Tuscumbia will be abandoned, along with the Sheffield switching yard and refueling facility. Additional sidings and "meeting" tracks along the relocated line may be required at some future time. The estimated cost of implementing the Build Alternative is \$28,613,000.00.

IMPACT SUMMARY

The following key findings are the basis of the Finding of No Significant Impact:

The proposed project will result in removal of an estimated 14 to 16 trains per day through the downtown area. The reduction in train traffic, along with the removal of a portion of the existing at-grade crossings in the downtown area, will improve traffic congestion and circulation in the downtown area. Travel paths within the downtown area will be safer and more efficient and response time by emergency vehicles will improve.

The proposed action may improve the long-term business and employment activity within the Tri-Cities area by improving level-of-service and traffic operation within the downtown area. The improvements in the downtown circulation patterns may also improve the competitiveness of the Tri-Cities area in the larger regional markets. The long-term impacts on the economy may be positive because of the improvement in downtown circulation and accessibility.

Positive impacts may result from the purchase of construction materials, construction payrolls and related spending, or the "multiplier effects" of construction spending.

Although a portion of the original tracks leading to the downtown area will be abandoned, rail service to several businesses will be maintained via an existing rail spur located on the east side of the downtown area.

Although there are no formal land use plans for the area, officials from the towns of Sheffield and Muscle Shoals have indicated that the project will not disrupt current or future growth patterns within the project corridor. The proposed project is expected to have a positive impact on the downtown area by stimulating economic growth, improving general circulation patterns and improving the response time by emergency vehicles in the downtown area. The Tuscumbia City Council passed a resolution opposing the proposed railroad relocation on April 23, 2001.

Consultation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Colbert County Soil Conservationist, concluded that the preferred alternative is not expected to have any substantial impact on farming.

No wetland areas as regulated under section 404 of the Clean Water Act were found within the project study area. No endangered or threatened species or their habitats were found to exist in the project study area.

The proposed action is not expected to be a significant encroachment on the flood plain. The project is consistent with the policies set forth in Executive Order No. 11988 for flood plain management.

The relocated portion of the mainline tracks will be located outside of the recharge area for the Big Spring public well. Only a small limited section of the new tracks will encroach on the recharge area. This encroachment occurs east of U.S. Highway 43 along the existing tracks. As a result, the risks from accidental pollutant releases from railroad operations will be greatly reduced under the relocation alternative. In addition, it should be noted that 14 to 16 trains per day will no longer run through any portion the recharge area, further reducing the risk of hazardous material spills. The project may result in short term impacts to surface waters from erosion and sedimentation associated with construction activities. In order to mitigate these short-term construction impacts, the project construction documents will incorporate "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) in order to minimize storm water erosion and sedimentation during construction.

The project will have no appreciable effect on the resources considered eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The project will, therefore, have no affect on the cultural resources in the area. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has concurred with this finding.

The preferred alternative will have no effect on "Wild or Scenic" rivers or stream segments. According to the National Park Service (NPS) there are no streams or rivers within the project study area listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory.

The preferred alternative will not affect any hazardous waste sites. See the letter, dated January 31, 2001, from the Alabama Department of Transportation, attached in the EA.

Based on field reconnaissance and aerial photography of the corridor, only one single-family residence will be impacted by the project. This residence is located approximately 230 feet north of the proposed railroad track along Frankfort Road. The current noise level at this receptor site is 53 L_{dn}, (49 from Frankfort Road and 51 from the Memphis to Atlanta highway). Future noise levels at this receptor site will be 65 L_{dn}, due solely to train operations. It should be noted that the Build Alternative would remove approximately 14 to 16 trains per day from the downtown area. The removal of these trains will have a beneficial impact on noise levels in the downtown area. Although the actual number of benefited sensitive receptors has not been counted, the project noise consultant estimated approximately 250 receptors will benefit from this decrease in noise levels. This number includes the Northwest Shoals Community College, Avalone Park and the Buffington

Recreational Field. The estimated decreases in noise levels include an 18 dB reduction in the area west of downtown where the existing track will be removed and a 7 dB reduction in other downtown areas where train operations will be reduced.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) concluded that the proposed project is not expected to exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, therefore, it is consistent with the State Implementation Plan for air quality.

The project will not have an adverse affect on any valuable mineral resources in the area according to the Geological Survey of Alabama.

The proposed action will result in temporary impacts to air and water quality. These impacts will, however, be limited to the construction phase of the project. The use of ALDOT's "Best Management Practices" during construction will minimize CO emissions, fugitive dust, and erosion impacts associated with the construction activities.

Temporary noise impacts are expected to occur in the immediate vicinity of construction activity. The noise levels from construction cannot be predicted because the types of equipment and construction methods are unknown at this time. It is up to the contractor to develop a noise control plan to mitigate construction noise. The plan should include measures to limit certain activities or equipment during the evenings, weekends, and holidays, and locating staging areas away from noise sensitive areas.

One business and one single-family residential structure will be displaced by the preferred alternative. The acquisition and relocation process will not cause a major impact on the community.

Solid wastes will be generated by the demolition of buildings that cannot be relocated. The wastes from these structures will be disposed of only at sites designated and permitted for this kind of waste. The overall impact to local waste disposal sites is expected to represent a small percentage of the total waste flow to local landfills. Railroad equipment, i.e., tracks and ties, will be recycled or sold for salvage.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

A Public Corridor Hearing was held at the Alabama Department of Transportation - Second Division Office in Tuscumbia, Alabama from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. on July 31, 2001. The purpose of the hearing was to inform the public of the proposed relocation of a section of the Norfolk Southern Railroad and to solicit public comment regarding the potential environmental, social and economic impacts associated with the

project. Including consulting and ALDOT personnel, a total of 181 individuals signed the attendance sheets. Comment sheets were made available.

One organized citizens' group attended the hearing and expressed their opposition to the proposed project; also, a large number of private individuals attended who either supported or opposed the project. The majority of comments from those who support the project involve the inconvenience of the trains blocking the streets for extended periods of time that causes delays in commuter traffic and emergency vehicles; the potential decline and/or loss of business from local shoppers who are deterred by at-grade crossings; the possibility of train/vehicle collision, de-railments, and possible hazardous material spills in a populated area; and the existing noise level.

In addition, a letter with comments from the attorney representing the North Alabama Preservation Coalition was presented to the FHWA and ALDOT. The Coalition is an association of businesses and citizens of the Shoals area who are concerned about the environmental, historic, and other impacts associated with the project.

The comments received from those who oppose the proposed railroad relocation pertain to several different issues which are addressed in the following discussion:

1. The construction of overpasses/underpasses at the present crossings would be a better alternative, in terms of safety, practicality, and cost.

This project initially began as a proposal to construct grade-separated crossings at Montgomery Avenue and Atlanta Avenue over the existing Norfolk Southern railroad tracks in downtown Sheffield. In 1994, a suggestion was made by a citizen attending a Public Involvement meeting to consider relocating the railroad. A feasibility study was completed in March 1999 that indicated the relocation would be a practical alternative that would meet the purpose and need of the project as well as alleviate the congestion problems of the Tri-Cities area. The railroad relocation was then presented as one of several alternatives in Public Involvement meetings conducted in 1999.

Several factors played a role in the decision to eliminate the overpass alternative in favor of the railroad relocation. The impact the overpass construction would have on several historic properties in downtown Sheffield would be significant. The overpass alternative would not eliminate noise and air pollution impacts associated with the trains that affect the downtown residential neighborhoods. The overpass alternative would only correct two of the intersections. The existing train traffic (16-18 trains per day) would continue to cause traffic congestion and barriers for emergency vehicles in the downtown area; therefore, the overpass

alternative would only partially address the need for improvements to congestion and traffic safety. And, given the proximity of the existing track to densely populated areas in **Sheffield** and Tuscumbia, the presence of 16 to 18 trains per day through the downtown area would always limit the potential solutions to future circulation and congestion problems in the area. The overpass alternative might be a never-ending solution because the initial investment in overpasses had the potential of commitments to future overpass projects at yet to be determined locations. Therefore, future development and circulation systems would always have to consider the crossing of the railroad in the decision-making process.

On the other hand, the railroad relocation alternative will result in removal of an estimated 14-16 trains per day through the downtown area. The reduction in train traffic, coupled with the removal of a portion of the existing at-grade crossings in downtown Sheffield, will improve traffic congestion and circulation. In addition, response times by emergency vehicles will improve. In addition, grade-separated crossings will be provided at all public roads along the relocation corridor to allow for uninterrupted flow of traffic. The relocation alternative will not impact any cultural or historic resources. Also, the air and noise pollution impacts associated with the trains in the downtown area will be greatly reduced with the relocation alternative.

Based on consideration of cost, environmental impacts, and public comments, the proposed relocation of the downtown railroad line to the south of Tuscumbia was selected as the Preferred Alternative.

2. Construction of the proposed relocation will contaminate the water supply.

According to a letter dated April 27, 2000 from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, the cities of Muscle Shoals and Sheffield use water directly from the Tennessee River and will not be impacted by the proposed project. The City of Tuscumbia uses a spring (Big Spring) and water treatment plant located in downtown Tuscumbia. A subsequent letter from ADEM dated September 10, 2001 indicates "the relocated railroad line does not intersect the Source Water Area for Big Spring."

The railroad is currently located within the recharge area and the proposed project will reduce potential contamination by abandoning a portion of the railroad and the closure of the refueling facility in downtown Sheffield. According to Norfolk Southern officials, a new refueling facility will not be needed after the railroad is relocated because the existing facility is used for "topping off" the tanks. Under the No-Build Alternative, or any overpass alternative in the downtown area, sixteen to eighteen trains would continue to run through the Big Spring recharge area as delineated by ADEM. Under the Preferred Alternative, this number is reduced to two to three trains per day.

3. St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church members are concerned about the noise level of trains passing by the church during services.

A noise assessment study of the project area was conducted. Using guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), a method of assessing the threshold of impact for rail traffic noise was determined. A common descriptor of environmental noise called the Average Sound Level (L_{dn}) was thought to be the most appropriate means of describing noise generated by trains. The L_{dn} is a noise metric that reflects the cumulative noise levels compiled and averaged over a 24-hour period and is weighted to account for the quieter background noise levels from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m., with a 10 decibel penalty applied for that period. It was recommended in the noise study that a L_{dn} of 65 dBA be used as the impact threshold for noise sensitive land uses in the vicinity of the proposed project.

According to the noise assessment study, the only structure to be negatively impacted by the proposed railroad relocation is one single-family residence. The home is located approximately 130 feet east of the existing Frankfort Road and 230 feet north of the proposed railroad and the future sound levels at this location would be 65 L_{dn}.

Although the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church will experience an increase in noise levels due to the proposed relocation, it will be approximately 985 feet southwest of the proposed railroad and will experience sound levels of approximately 58 L_{dn} according to the noise assessment study. This is less than 65 L_{dn} which is the determined threshold for noise sensitive land uses.

4. Productive farmland located in the proposed project area would be ruined.

The railroad relocation will convert approximately 68 hectares (168 acres) of land from rural/farmland use for the right-of-way. This conversion is not expected to cause any damage in current land use patterns in the project area. Farm equipment crossings are to be provided on an as-needed basis for farm operations.

In addition, according to the Colbert County Soil Conservationist, approximately 19.4 hectares (48 acres) of prime farmland will be converted to transportation use as a result of this project. This amount represents less than 0.04 percent of the total farmland in Colbert County that is defined as prime or unique farm soils; therefore, the project is not expected to have any substantial impact on farming.

5. Construction of the proposed project would negatively impact wildlife and/or endangered species and wildlife habitat in the area. In addition, the EA fails to recognize the project's potential adverse effects on endangered species of freshwater mussels which have historically been found in Bear Creek, located very near the railroad right of way.

The only flora or endangered species that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined may occur in the project area is the lyrate bladder-pod (*Lesquerella lyrata*), a federally listed plant species. At the request of the USFWS, a survey was conducted by Dr. David Whetstone to determine if the species occurs within the study area. Dr. Whetstone, an expert on endangered plant species with significant experience in the northern Alabama area, conducted a field survey on September 4, 2000 and found no individuals of the species of concern in the project area. The USFWS concurred with these findings in a letter dated September 27, 2000. In addition, Bear Creek is located approximately 20 miles south of the project study area in Marion and Franklin Counties. Little Bear Creek is the body of water located in the project area.

6. Homes will be destroyed and property, including farms, will be divided.

The Relocation Study found that one business and one single-family residential structure will be displaced by the relocation of the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks. The residential structure is located at the eastern end of the project between U.S. Highway 43 and the existing Norfolk Southern railroad tracks. The displaced family is not low income, elderly, handicapped or belonging to a minority group. The income range of the displaced family appears to be upper middle class. According to the Relocation Study, there is an adequate supply of replacement housing of a similar type in the vicinity of the existing residential structure.

The business to be displaced is a sawmill located on U.S. Highway 72 near the western end of the project. There is ample property available in the immediate area of the existing business and from appearances, the sawmill may have additional land suitable to continue their operation at their present location.

7. The proposed project is simply moving the same problem to a different location and does not remedy the safety and traffic issues in downtown Sheffield.

The project will eliminate several at-grade crossings in Sheffield, Tuscumbia, and Muscle Shoals by relocating a section of the track outside of town and will eliminate the railroad fueling and switching area. The project will divert as many as ten trains from the downtown area to the relocated track and reduce the train-related congestion by approximately 90 percent. In addition, the project will include grade-separated crossings at all public roads along the new railroad alignment.

8. The Environmental Assessment is deficient.

According to 23 CFR 771.115(a)(3), actions that significantly affect the environment require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and “new construction or extension of fixed rail transit facilities...” is an example of an action that typically requires an EIS; it is not an automatic requirement for an EIS. Actions in which the significance of the environmental impacts is not clearly established require an Environmental Assessment based on 23 CFR 771.115(c). For this project, the decision rests with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) in determining which document should be prepared. Based on extensive data collection and feasibility studies, it was determined that an EA would be an appropriate class of action. In addition, one of the purposes of an EA is to determine the need for the preparation of an EIS.

The EA was prepared according to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; the Council of Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508); and, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) environmental impact procedures (23 CFR 771). No major or significant impacts were discovered during the preparation of the EA, thereby supporting the original FHWA/ALDOT decision.

9. The project title is not accurate, it is not a “relocation” of the railroad, but construction of a new section of railroad.

The project involves constructing a new section of railroad and abandoning a section of existing railroad track in the downtown Sheffield while retaining a portion of the existing railroad track to allow service to several customers located in that area. In addition, several at-grade crossings in the towns of Sheffield, Tusculumbia, and Muscle Shoals will be eliminated.

10. The Throckmorton House and the Civil War battlefield near Little Bear Creek were not mentioned in the Cultural Resource Assessment and should be evaluated for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

The University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Research, completed an additional survey of the Little Bear Creek Skirmish Locality, in which it was determined that the railroad relocation project will not have an adverse effect on the Civil War battlefield. Additionally, it has been determined that the Throckmorton House has been modified as to make it ineligible for the National Register. The concurrence letter signed April 22, 2003 by SHPO is attached.

11. There is a potential for noise impacts on Melrose, a structure that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, as well as on the Belle Mont Plantation and the Throckmorton House, structures that are potentially eligible for the National Register.

According to the noise assessment study prepared for this project it was determined that projected noise levels equal to or exceeding 65 L_{dn} are considered an impact. Based on the Noise-Distance Graph shown as Figure 3-7 in the Environmental Assessment, structures at a distance of 1,000 feet from the relocated railroad will experience sound levels of 57 L_{dn} . Melrose is approximately a quarter of a mile (1,320 feet) east of the proposed railroad relocation corridor and Belle Mont Plantation is roughly 1.5 miles (7,920 feet) south of the corridor. Due to the significant distance between these structures and the relocation corridor, noise impacts are not anticipated. The Throckmorton House's architectural and agricultural integrity are so compromised that the property does not meet National Register criteria for listing in the NRHP.

12. The project area has extensive sinkhole features and the relocated railroad tracks may cause the area to be vulnerable to contamination from construction, spills from rail accidents, and other surface sources.

Based on the letter dated June 14, 1994 from the U.S. Geological Survey, the project is located in an area susceptible to the development of sinkholes or land subsidence, however few sinkholes were observed in the immediate vicinity of the project.

13. The air quality analysis contained in the EA is inadequate and it fails to discuss the adverse air quality effects associated with diesel-powered trains used by Norfolk Southern and the specific pollutants (nitrogen oxide and particulate matter) they emit.

Under current FHWA/ALDOT environmental regulations, it is not necessary to perform a detailed air quality analysis in "attainment areas" within Alabama. The project area is located in an attainment area according to the letter dated September 21, 1994 from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management; therefore, an air quality analysis was not required. It should be noted that this project is not proposing to add capacity to any roadway or railroad line which would have the potential to adversely impact air quality in the area. Additionally, one of the principal causes of mobile source pollution is idling traffic. The no-build alternative will result in slower speeds and more idling traffic at existing at-grade crossings in a highly populated area. The proposed railroad relocation would reduce train traffic considerably at the at-grade crossings in downtown Sheffield and separated crossings will be constructed at all public roads along the relocation corridor to allow for uninterrupted flow of traffic, thereby reducing air pollution caused by the idling traffic.

Nitrogen oxide (NOx) is a reactive pollutant which is not evaluated at a project level analysis. Also, in 1998, the Environmental Protection Agency promulgated final emission standards for oxides of nitrogen (NOx), hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO), particulate matter (PM), and smoke for newly manufactured and remanufactured locomotives and locomotive engines. However, as stated, these emission standards are intended for manufacturers and remanufacturers of diesel locomotive engines and are not applicable in a mobile source air quality analysis.

14. The EA fails to consider the cumulative impacts.

Early in the planning process of this project, the proposed Memphis to Atlanta Freeway corridor was used as a basis for much of the relocated rail line. The proposed highway corridor was determined to be compatible with this section of the Norfolk Southern mainline. Neither project is dependent on the other project in selecting this location. Other considerations such as topography and predominantly agricultural/forested land use make this area an ideal choice for a transportation corridor.

Cumulative impacts for the relocation corridor and the highway corridor were considered in the EA where appropriate. For example, the noise assessment study analyzed the noise impact of the train traffic along the relocation corridor assuming the proposed Memphis to Atlanta Freeway was in place. It was determined that only one residence will need to be acquired because of noise impacts along the relocations corridor. The noise impacts in the downtown area will be reduced by relocating the mainline of the railroad outside of town. Also, the businesses will not be adversely affected because a spur will remain in downtown Sheffield to serve the local businesses while the relocated mainline track will eliminate traffic congestion and improve safety.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The EA has adequately addressed the socioeconomic, physical and biological impacts associated with the proposed action and remain conclusive. A thorough analysis of the potential impacts has determined that the proposed action will have no significant impacts on the human environment.



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Design Bureau

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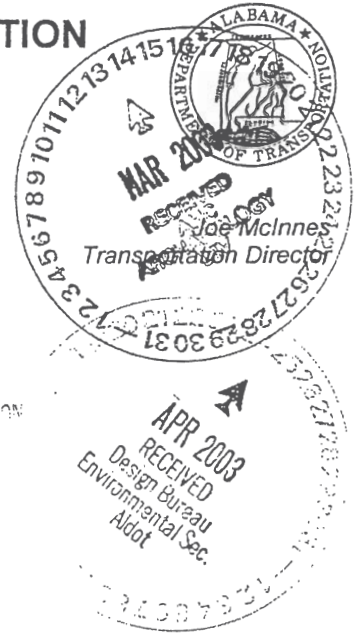
Bob Riley
Governor

February 13, 2003

Ms. Elizabeth Ann Brown
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

APR 30 2003

SHAM OFFICE



RE: AHC # 00-2228
Sheffield Railroad Relocation
ALDOT Project RRS-8817 (1) Colbert County

Dear Ms. Brown:

In response to your letter dated February 26, 2003 we have included the following comments. The USGS topographic map that was enclosed with the University of Alabama, OAR, review of the Civil War earthwork does not reflect an alternate route from what was delineated in the OAR 2000 report. The alignment on the map was hand drawn and intended as a general reference to the area since the earthwork reference map was drawn at a 1 inch equals 200 foot scale and did not show the surrounding area. The drawing in the OAR 2000 report is the same drawing and corridor referenced throughout the environmental assessment and shown in figures 1-2, 2-1, and 3-1 of that document.

Therefore, it is the submitted evaluation that the Sheffield Railroad Relocation Colbert County will not constitute an adverse effect on any property on or eligible for the NRHP. Please review this information, if the SHPO agrees with the findings in this letter, please sign and return a copy to the Design Bureau. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please review this information, if the SHPO agrees with the findings in this letter, please sign and return a copy to the Design Bureau. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Don T. Arkle, Chief
Design Bureau

By: Alfredo Acoff
Alfredo Acoff, Coordinator
Environmental Technical Section

Cc: File
FHWA
Barge Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon, Inc.

CONCUR: Elizabeth Ann Brown

DATE: April 22, 2003



DON SIEGELMAN
GOVERNOR

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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September 21, 2001



PAUL BOWLIN
TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Don Arkle
Design Bureau

ATTENTION: Ms. Alfredo Acoff-
Environmental Technical Section

FROM: James F. Baker *JFB*
Second Division ROW Engineer

RE: Project No. RRS-8817(1)
Proposed Sheffield Railroad Relocation

A Public Corridor Hearing was held at the Second Division Office in Tuscumbia, Alabama from 5:00 PM until 7:00 PM on July 31, 2001.

The purpose of this Corridor Hearing was for the public to be aware of the proposed relocation of the railroad, and to make any to make any comments concerning any aspect of the project they (the public) wished to bring to the attention of the Engineering Consultants and ALDOT personnel.

Including consulting and ALDOT personnel, a total 181 individuals signed the registration sheets.

There ~~was~~ an organized citizens' group against the relocation ~~present~~ who, while cordial, were **quite pointed** in their opposition to the move; also, there were private individuals who were either "for" or "against" the proposal. Comment sheets were available to all.

Elected **officials** who turned in or sent comment sheets to ALDOT with their (the officials) **preference** indicated that Sheffield and Muscle Shoals were for the relocation, while Tuscumbia was not.

Following **are** the basic negative "against" and positive "for" comments received from the public.

Negative (All Against)

1. The proposed relocation being a source of contaminant for the Spring Creek aquifer.
2. One condemned Railroad acre of right of way will destroy at least ten acres for agriculture production and future development in an area that still remains available for future growth and productivity.
3. The apparent projected cost of relocation is greater than building overpasses at the present crossings.
4. Woodlands, croplands, and pasture would be ruined.
5. The ecology would be stressed concerning flora and endangered species.
6. Access to rural locations such as fields would be reduced due to limited crossings.
7. The railroad prism would re-route drainage.
8. The serenity of a rural setting would be violated.
9. A life-long home, potential homesites and farmland would be obliterated by combinations of the Railroad Relocation and the proposed Memphis to Atlanta location.
10. The money for the project could be put to other use elsewhere.
11. St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church members were concerned about trains passing during services and interrupting worship (noiselevel), and did not want the relocation.
12. Part 2.5 of the **Environmental** Assessment was questioned concerning why the alternate route was selected (the comment sheet stated the answer did not satisfy the requirements and was not definite.

Positive (All For)

1. Relocation means blockage of all present grade crossings would become non-existent, allowing traffic to flow into the Sheffield business district without time consuming delays due to trains.
2. The possibility of train/vehicle collisions, de-railments, and possible hazardous material spills in a populated area would be non-existent.
3. The noise level in the presently affected areas would cease.
4. More business might come to the Sheffield area if potential customers aren't deterred by on-grade crossings.
5. Police, ambulances and firetrucks could respond to emergencies without the potential of having to wait, or detour due to a blocked crossing.
6. Students and commuters could assume they would get to college, work or business appointments on time, where they could be delayed by trains, as the situation is now.
7. Basically, with the exception of traffic signals, which are a "must", if the railroad is completely relocated, with no train traffic moving on the presently located tracks, there would be an uninterrupted flow of traffic which would benefit the public and business interests.

The majority of those for the proposed move mentioned trains blocking streets for extended time periods, which caused emergency vehicles and commuter traffic delays; also, potential loss of business from local shoppers.

The majority of those opposed to the relocation were basically against loss of property, homes, home-sites and serenity. There was also the fear of water contamination.

The proposed solution from most comments concerning leaving the railroad in its present location was to build overpasses in 3 locations.

/cjb

Attachments

C: Barge, Waggoner, Sumner & Cannon, Inc.
File