



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

December 23, 2003

The Honorable Kenny Guinn
Governor
The State of Nevada
Executive Chambers
Capitol Building
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Governor Guinn:

As part of the planning for a repository at Yucca Mountain, the Department of Energy is proceeding to design a transportation system to serve the repository. In the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for a Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada*, (Final EIS) the Department identified mostly rail as the preferred alternative transportation mode, both nationally and in Nevada, for shipments of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. The mostly rail alternative would lead to about a fivefold reduction in the number of shipments to the repository, compared to reliance primarily on truck transportation.

If the Department adopts mostly rail as the transportation mode in Nevada, a rail line to connect the repository site at Yucca Mountain to an existing rail line in the State of Nevada would need to be constructed. The Final EIS evaluated five potential rail corridors in Nevada. Three corridors, Caliente, Caliente-Chalk Mountain and Carlin, are north of the repository. Two southern corridors, Jean and Valley-Modified, run through the Las Vegas Valley.

The comment process for the Draft EIS lasted more than six months with 21 public hearings. The Department received approximately 12,900 comments on a wide variety of issues, including the five potential rail corridors in Nevada analyzed in the EIS. We have carefully considered these comments in identifying our corridor preference.

At this time, the Department is identifying Caliente as our preferred corridor, with the Carlin corridor as the secondary preference. The attributes of these corridors lead us to be of the view that they will best assure the safe, secure, and timely transport of materials to Yucca Mountain. Our preference for Caliente takes into consideration its more remote location, and the diminished likelihood of land use conflicts.



If the Department adopts the mostly rail mode, a Record of Decision selecting a rail corridor could be issued no sooner than 30 days after publication of this preference announcement in the Federal Register. DOE will also issue a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register before initiating preparation of a rail alignment environmental impact statement. If there are any facts or views you wish to bring to our attention bearing on our preference for the Caliente corridor, or the ultimate selection of a rail corridor, I would appreciate hearing from you.

If you have any questions, please contact me:

Sincerely,



Margaret S. Y. Chu, Ph.D.
Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive
Waste Management