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Cynthia Brown

Chief, Section of Administration Surface Transportation Board Office of Proceedings
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Part of
Public Record

Reference to Docket No. FD 36471

Dear Ms. Brown,

I live in the town of Buena Vista, Colorado. The Tennessee Pass Rail Line passes through the middle of Buena Vista and continues along the Arkansas River through Browns Canyon National Monument. I oppose the re-opening of the Tennessee Pass Rail Line by the Colorado Midland and Pacific Railway because its impacts will be very detrimental to my town, the river, the National Monument, and the economy of the Arkansas Valley. I specifically oppose the exemption to regulations that the Colorado Midland and Pacific Railway has applied for.

This rail line has been inactive for more than two decades. During that time, the tourism and outdoor recreation economies in Buena Vista, Salida and the Arkansas Valley as a whole have thrived. The railroad tracks cross Main Street in Buena Vista in the middle of downtown, where the introduction of freight trains will disrupt traffic, create noise, and degrade the character of the town.

The trains will also change the character of the experiences in Browns Canyon National Monument. The centerpiece of the Monument is the Arkansas River, which is the most popular whitewater rafting river in the country. The railroad tracks run right next to the river, which has also been designated a Gold Medal Trout Stream.

There is every indication that the rail line could be used to transport heavy crude oil from the Uintah Basin in Utah to gulf coast refineries. This can not be allowed to happen.

First of all, Uintah Tar Sands need to be left in the ground because they produce low value products, require more refining, and spills of heavy crude oil impact the environment including aquifers much more than lighter grade oil. In addition, refining heavy crude generates more carbon emissions than other grades of oil. The impacts of heavy crude oil to the climate in an age where renewable energy is at the forefront of the energy market are unacceptable.

More specifically, the transport of heavy crude oil through the Arkansas Valley, the towns of Buena Vista and Salida, and through Browns Canyon National Monument, right next to the Gold Medal Trout waters of the Arkansas River are too big a risk and too big an impact to be allowed. One derailment is all it would take to ruin the trout fishery, the riparian environment, and the quality of the river experience. The constant noise produced by the trains in Browns Canyon National Monument would be extremely detrimental to experiences in the Monument and to its wildlife populations.

Re-opening the Tennessee Pass Rail Line is very controversial, and as a result, any consideration of doing so should include extensive public comment and due process. For this reason, I strongly urge you to deny the continuance control exemption requested by the Colorado Midland and Pacific Railway.

Sincerely,

Susan Greiner
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