

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD***Washington, DC 20423**Office of Environmental Analysis*

September 23, 2014

Alice Whiteman
President
Friends of 2 Rivers
Milltown, Montana 59851

Re: FD 30186, Tongue River Railroad Company, Inc.—Rail Construction and
Operation—In Custer, Powder River and Rosebud Counties, MT

Dear Ms. Whiteman:

Thank you for your September 8, 2014 letter addressed to Chairman Elliott regarding the Tongue River Railroad Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Because your letter raises environmental concerns, Chairman Elliot asked me, as the Director of the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA), to respond on his behalf.

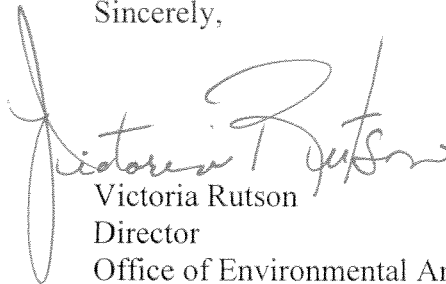
In your letter, you request that the Surface Transportation Board (Board) consider impacts to Milltown and Bonner, Montana, in the EIS that we currently are preparing for the Tongue River Railroad's proposed rail line construction and operation in southeastern, MT. You also ask that we provide public involvement opportunities for the residents of Milltown and Bonner. Finally, you request that the EIS include analyses of impacts on residential and emergency traffic, global warming, and mercury levels in local water bodies.

OEA is responsible for conducting the environmental review process to ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related environmental laws as part of the Board's licensing process. OEA will address your concerns in the Draft EIS, which we anticipate issuing in the spring of 2015. At that time, we will solicit public comments and conduct public meetings. We have added your organization and address to the list of those who will receive the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS will also be posted on the Board's website (www.stb.dot.gov) and the project website (www.tonguerivereis.com). We have not yet determined the number and locations for the public meetings next spring.

After the close of the public comment period, we will prepare a Final EIS that responds to comments on the Draft EIS and makes recommendations to the Board, including recommendations for mitigation measures. In reaching its final decision whether to approve, deny, or approve with environmental mitigation conditions Tongue River Railroad's proposal, the Board will consider the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, and all environmental comments that are received.

Again, thank you very much for your letter. We have placed your letter and my response in the environmental record for this proceeding. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to call me at 202-245-0295 or Danielle Gosselin of my staff at 202-245-0300.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name and title.

Victoria Rutson

Director

Office of Environmental Analysis