



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

March 31, 2015

Steve Charter, Chair
Northern Plains Resource Council
200 S. 27th Street, Suite A
Billings, MT 59101

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

Dear Mr. Charter:

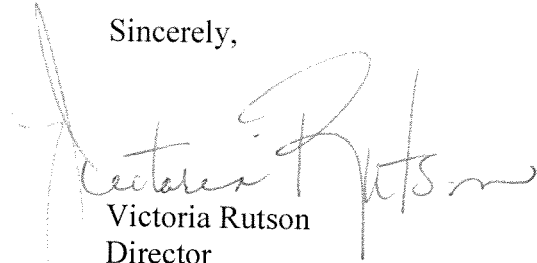
Thank you for your letter regarding the Tongue River Railroad Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In your letter, you request confirmation that the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has received letters from ten communities requesting participation in the EIS process as well as two coal reports for consideration in the Draft EIS. OEA has received numerous letters in this case and has responded to letters addressed to the Board Members. All incoming and outgoing correspondence can be found on the Board's website (www.stb.dot.gov) under environmental correspondence. OEA has also received the report prepared for the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) that was provided by Northern Plains Resource Council in an April 2013 filing. I can confirm that we received the letters you list from all but the Whitefish City Council and the Seattle City Council and did not receive the coal report entitled, Heavy Traffic Still Ahead, but that report is in the public domain and we are aware of it.

As you know, 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. We will address your concerns regarding cumulative and downline impacts in the Draft EIS, which we anticipate issuing in mid-April. At that time, we will solicit public comments and conduct public meetings. The Draft EIS will be posted on the Board's website and the project website (www.tonguerivereis.com) and will also include details about the public meetings.

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,



Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis