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Organization: Individual

State: Montana

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

As a private individual who is very concerned about the economic future of Big Sky Country, I wanted to comment in Strong Support of your Draft EIS concerning the Tongue River Railroad Project in Southeastern Montana (Docket # 30186). Having been born, raised and educated in Eastern Montana, I left the state in the mid-eighties in search of better economic opportunities. I was able to return to Montana in 2000 and have since lived and worked in Southeastern Montana. Thus, I think it's important to note a few items as follows: 1) This area of Southeastern Montana is currently a very impoverished region. Unemployment and under-employment rates are sky high and certainly one the worst regions in the entire state plus per capita levels are near the bottom of our state, 2) Estimated property taxes to local and state governmental units from a successful completion of this railroad and the related coal mine would be over \$90 million per year (That's a tremendous opportunity for state school programs, elderly care services or public infrastructure maintenance / replacement needs, 3) I feel that this project (as noted by the Draft EIS) could be built correctly with Minimum Environmental Impacts yet with Tremendous & Positive Economic Benefits, 4) I understand the lengthy process and to be due diligent, but if the country and Montana did this much time consuming review to build the US Interstate Highway System, we would still be driving on little two lane roads, 5) Perhaps, the well funded Special Interest Groups should simply go away and let the railroad company and the landowners get together over the kitchen table and find a way to make it all work, 6) As former Governor Brian Schweitzer stated once on this opportunity, "Most States would tear their eye teeth out with a pair of pillars to have such a great opportunity as this." (estimated) and 7) The time has come to Find Solutions to Make this Work, to Move Forward and Permit this Unique Opportunity that will benefit all of Montana. Thanks you for the opportunity for comments!