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Submission Text

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Thank you. Good evening. My name is Mary Laporte. I live at 605 South 2nd Street West in Missoula. I am also a member of Montana Elders for Livable Tomorrow, MELT, which has been very involved in this. There are some of our members here tonight.

In addition to personally experiencing being woken up in the middle of the night with the existing trains that I hear out my window, and the just appalling notion that this number could be doubled, I had an opportunity on a beautiful spring Sunday afternoon to do some canvassing with Nick Engelfried from Blue Skies Coalition up on some of the northside neighborhoods. We knocked on doors and talked to some of the residents there who are really literally looking at coal trains right across the road from them, and there's a lot of concern there.

I remember one gentleman who I spoke to said that he was not sleeping at night. He was hoping that he would be able to move out of his apartment. He pointed out that his apartment building is already suffering the impacts, structural damage from the vibrations from the trains. There were cracks in his walls. He was just vitally concerned about the prospect of more trains.

At MELT, we've been really concerned about the health effects. Maybe it's possible to play down the coal dust with the surfactants, and the denial of coal dust, but the diesel fumes are a huge problem. It's been mentioned earlier tonight and it's in a lot of literature. It's known that an increase in train traffic means more diesel fumes.

Diesel fumes contain particulate matter, benzene, and other particulate matters that are known to cause cancer. Particulate matter, 10 microns or less in diameter, are directly linked to health concerns. Diesel fumes contain 2.4 microns in diameter. While those chronic effects everybody, the young, pregnant women, the elderly are at extreme risk with this.

Dr. Paul Smith is a member of MELT and is active around town. He's a pediatric pulmonologist. He has spoken very eloquently about the number of children that he's seen that have asthma, and the calculation that one in every 12 children are affected by asthma. It's occurring even in the pristine state of Montana, that we're sort of on par with states with high coal industry in Appalachia, and he's very concerned about this.

Then finally, I'd like to quote another member of MELT, Bill Ritchie, who's in the Coal Road to China film. He made a very telling statement when he said that: "The coal trains or increased and coal production, they might produce jobs, but most of those jobs are going to be in the health care industry."

I would like to urge the Surface Transportation Board to take the no action alternative on approving this railroad. Thank you.