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Commenter: Willis Curdy

Organization:

State: Montana

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

U.S. Surface Transportation Board, After reading the Draft EIS for the Tongue River Railroad Project, I find that the DEIS is insufficient in addressing the following: 1. Impact on farmers and ranchers in the Tongue River and Otter Creek areas 2. Failure to address cultural areas located on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation 3. Failure to address impacts on the Missoula, Montana community in terms of noise, coal dust pollution, diesel pollution, and threats to emergency responders accessing several areas in the City of Missoula and Missoula County. On numerous occasions, I have worked with farmers and ranchers in the Tongue River and Otter Creek areas. These farmer/ranchers depend on the Tongue River and Otter Creeks for their agricultural operations. The DEIS does not sufficiently address coal traffic on irrigation supplies, splitting ranches with rail lines and coal dust on land adjacent to the proposed rail line. I have also worked with the Northern Cheyenne tribe fighting wildland fires on reservation lands. While conducting fire operations, my crews and I had to make adjustments in our suppression activities in order to not disturb cultural sites. The DEIS makes little or no effort to address impacts on those sites. Finally, as a forty seven year resident of Missoula County, I believe the DEIS does not take into consideration the impact of coal dust and a significant increase in rail traffic through our county. Rail traffic proceeds through several Missoula neighborhoods and additional coal dust and diesel fumes present a serious health hazard to those residents. There are a number of grade crossings used by emergency personnel to provide fire and EMS services to a significant portion of our county population. Traditionally, trains proceed across those crossings at a slow speed normally taking a full five minutes to traverse those roads. Additional traffic will threaten the safety of our public. To address these concerns, I am asking the STB to conduct hearings in the Missoula area and address my concerns with rail operations in the Tongue River, Otter Creek and Northern Cheyenne Reservation areas. Respectfully submitted, Willis Curdy, Representative House District 98, Montana House of Representatives.