

Stop the Tongue River Railroad

To: Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423
ATTN: Office of Environmental Analysis, Docket No. 30186

Your Environmental Impact Statement is seriously flawed, and I urge you to choose the **No Action Alternative**.

You state: "All exported Tongue River coal would displace other Powder River coal that otherwise would have been exported rather than incrementally adding to the total tonnage of coal exported."

Your data supporting this conclusion is outdated and inadequate and allows you to magically ignore the cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed 45-mile spur line that will open the Otter Creek coal mine in southeastern Montana. Developing the Otter Creek Mine would release over 2.5 billion tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide when coal from the mine is burned. Dumping more than a billion tons of Montana coal on the market would be a disaster for our climate, triggering what the International Panel of Climate Change terms "abrupt or irreversible" tipping points.

You state: "Tongue River coal, with its lower transportation and production costs, would primarily displace other Powder River Basin coal destined for markets in the Upper Midwest." And: "The total volume of coal trains that would move to ports in the Pacific Northwest from the Powder River Basin would be the same regardless of whether or not the proposed railroad is approved and constructed."

This conclusion contradicts the findings of University of Montana economist Tom Power, Ph.D., and other economists. There is no domestic market for Otter Creek coal. This coal will be exported to Asia. Your EIS ignores the environmental impacts of increased coal development and the rail traffic hauling the coal through hundreds of communities in the Northwest along the 1,000-mile route to West Coast ports. Trains traveling from the new mine would add to existing fossil fuel train traffic—including

(Over)

explosive Bakken oil trains—in Montana, Washington, and Oregon. These coal trains would expose millions of Americans to increased pollution, endanger the water quality of thousands of the Northwest's rivers and streams, and increase safety hazards in towns and at rail crossings.

At a time when our nation should be transitioning to clean energy, coal companies want to keep us locked into coal dependence for the next several decades. Indeed, the Surface Transportation Board must consider the safety and welfare of ordinary Americans rather than tailor its EIS to further the special interests of the Tongue River Railroad investors, Arch Coal, billionaire Warren Buffet (who owns the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad), and Mars Candy heir Forrest Mars, Jr.

I believe your environmental impact statement should play a crucial role in furthering international efforts to combat climate change. Please reject the Tongue River Railroad and leave the Otter Creek coal in the ground.

Please choose the No Action Alternative.

Name Virginia Wiseman
Address 923 NE Alberta St
City Portland State OR Zip 97211