

April 9, 2015

Deb Miller, Acting Chairwoman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairwoman Miller and Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

We are a group of elected officials from Montana communities traversed by railroad lines. We are concerned about the possible increase in rail traffic as coal mining companies plan to export coal from the Powder River Basin to proposed West Coast ports. This potential increase, along with the current increase in rail traffic that is already occurring due to shipments of Bakken crude oil, is having great impact on our communities.

We understand that the construction of the Tongue River Railroad (TRR) would contribute significantly to this additional coal export rail traffic as it would connect the proposed Otter Creek coal mine in southeastern Montana to the existing east-west rail line crossing Montana. We understand that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has committed to looking at downrail impacts in the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) being prepared for the TRR. Because the additional coal trains using the TRR would impact our communities, we request that the STB consider these impacts that our communities would experience in its EIS on the TRR.

Many infrastructure upgrades would be required to mitigate the negative effects of increased rail traffic on public safety, traffic flow, and air quality. The health, safety, and economic vitality of our communities is at risk. We believe that it is the responsibility of the STB, as the federal regulatory agency responsible for the rail system, to ensure that Montana communities are not forced to bear the costs associated with these necessary infrastructure projects (*e.g.*, overpasses, underpasses, and quiet zones).

We ask that you consider, and formally include, our communities in the EIS as you move forward in the review process for the TRR. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

See attached list

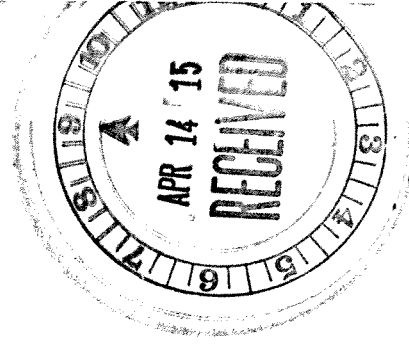
Cc: Ann D. Begeman, Board Member
Victoria Rutson, Director, STB Office of Environmental Analysis

Name	Position	Location
Sue Malek	State Senator, SD 46	Missoula, MT
Tom Facey	State Senator, SD 50	Missoula, MT
Christine Kaufmann	State Senator, SD 40	Helena, MT
Andres Haladay	City Commissioner	Helena, MT
Katherine Haque-Hausrath	City Commissioner	Helena, MT
Tom Woods	State Representative, HD 62	Bozeman, MT
Denise Hayman	State Representative, HD 66	Bozeman, MT
Zach Brown	State Representative, HD 63	Bozeman, MT
Virginia Court	State Representative, HD 50	Billings, MT
Kathy Kelker	State Representative, HD 47	Billings, MT
Margie MacDonald	State Representative, HD 51	Billings, MT
Robyn Driscoll	State Senator, SD 25	Billings, MT
Ken Crouch	City Councilman	Billings, MT
Becky Bird	City Councilwoman	Billings, MT
Mike Yakawich	City Councilman	Billings, MT



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