



The Big Sky Country

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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OFFICE CHAIRMAN
2014 OCT 30 PM 12:01
COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS

21 December, 2014

Daniel R. Elliott, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Elliott and Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

I serve the Great State of Montana and the hard working people of the Magic City, Billings. Increase in rail traffic as coal mining companies move to export coal from the Powder River Basin to West Coast ports will have a serious impact on the communities I serve. HD-51 sits in the middle of Billings and is bisected by the BNSF railroad. While 30,000 people live south of the tracks, all emergency medical services are north of the tracks. The most direct route between the two are two at-grade crossings on North 27th and North 28th Streets.

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 are already noticing delays in emergency services due to increased oil shipments from the Bakken to West Coast refineries. When 40-50 coal trains are added to the traffic load, we will have effectively cut our city in two for most of the day.

We understand that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has committed to looking at down rail impacts in the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) being prepared for the TRR; however, the STB has yet to consult with any down rail communities. 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.

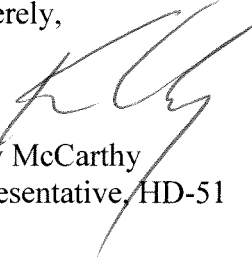
Infrastructure upgrades would be required to mitigate the negative effects of increased rail traffic on public safety, traffic flow, and air quality. The health, safety, and economic vitality of our

communities are at risk. The STB, as the federal regulatory agency responsible for the rail system, has a responsibility 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 me with any questions.

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

Sincerely,



Kelly McCarthy
Representative, HD-51

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