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Organization: City of Sandpoint, Idaho

State: Idaho

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

Please see attached.

Good Afternoon

My name is Carrie Logan and I am Mayor of the City of Sandpoint, Idaho – a town of 7200 on the shores of Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend Oreille River. We are historically referenced as The Funnel because of the convergence of three rail lines – Union Pacific, BNSF and Montana Rail Link.

Please choose the No Action Alternative for the following reasons:

1. The STB has not considered down-line impacts to the West of the proposed rail line and wrongly assumes that the coal is destined for domestic plants in the Midwest.
 - a. The DEIS states that if coal export terminals are approved on the West Coast and other mines are developed in the Tongue River area, the new rail line could move more than 26 trains per day. Many of those trains will be coming through Sandpoint. As a result of the increasing installation of sidings and improved track sensors BNSF is scheduling much faster delivery times – Spokane to Chicago was 121 hours and has been reduced to 65 hours; Chicago to Spokane was 105 hours and will be reduced to 68 hours. This faster delivery time means more trains can occupy the rail space resulting in increased availability for coal deliveries to the west coast.
<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150609006428/en/BNSF-Introduces-Intermodal-Service-Schedules-Northern-Region#.VXohblVVikp>
 - b. Domestic coal markets are rapidly shrinking and Montana Rail Link has stated locally that it expects to increase shipments to export terminals for overseas markets. . The OEA study concluded that most of the coal would be used domestically in the Midwest. However, economic changes could easily shift a large portion of the Tongue River coal to be exported from the Pacific coast. If this occurs rail traffic, safety and environmental impacts would likely increase for the down line segments West of Tongue River.

Appendix C (Coal production and Markets) of the EIS has provided a scenario where as much as 53% of the coal would be exported rather than used domestically. “Tongue River coal would be closer to export terminals than most other U.S. coal sources, including coal currently produced in the Wyoming portion of the Powder River Basin. Proximity to terminals makes Tongue River coal more attractive for exporting. “ “...the expansion of the Pacific Northwest export terminals would allow Tongue River coal to be delivered to the Pacific Basin at competitive prices.”

Source:

http://www.tonguerivereis.com/documents/draft_eis/appendices/AppC_CoalProduction.pdf

c. Otter Creek coal has a higher sodium content than other Powder River Basin Coal and can't be burned in most domestic coal plants – so it's destined for overseas markets.

2. Coal trains are known to spill coal dust and coal, and this impacts our health and safety. Diesel fumes are particularly harmful for vulnerable populations.
 - a. While the railroad requires shippers to spray coal cars with surfactant to keep down the dust, only an estimated 30 % of shippers comply with the rule. Because the surfactant wears off and has to be reapplied, BNSF is building a station to apply surfactant in the Tri Cities –AFTER the trains pass through Sandpoint.
 - b. That dust will settle in homes along the tracks, and will be inhaled by residents of those homes. Coal contains toxic metals such as mercury, arsenic and lead. No one has studied how coal dust and diesel fumes together could affect the health of people living along the tracks.
 - c. That dust also settles into ballast of the rail lines. This causes maintenance problems for the tracks and can lead to derailments. With the increase in the number of Bakken crude oil trains also traveling through our community, this is risk we cannot take.
 - d. The federal government has predicted 10 derailments per year of trains carrying highly volatile Bakken crude oil or ethanol. An oil train derailment could be catastrophic. We increase our chances of a derailment in our area with the increase in coal train traffic.
3. Traffic impacts haven't been addressed. The DEIS doesn't call for any mitigation to make the railroad partners pay their fair share of crossing improvements.
 - a. Rail traffic is expected to double with the increase in Bakken oil trains and coal trains through North Idaho.
 - b. North Idaho has a number of unprotected at-grade crossings. The increase in trains will mean more trains and cars.
 - c. Stopped traffic at at-grade crossings means delays for emergency vehicles. Delays risk the lives of patients and accident victims.
 - d. Many at-grade crossings will need improvements. Our local and state jurisdictions cannot afford to pay for overpasses and underpasses.
4. Building this railroad will add a country's worth of carbon to our atmosphere and make our fish unsafe to eat.
 - a. The Draft EIS estimates the indirect result of building the railroad and shipping Otter Creek coal to the international market could eventually result in 81 million metric tons of carbon dioxide being released into

the atmosphere annually. That's the same amount of CO2 emitted by Romania or North Korea in a year.

- b. In Idaho, like many western states, we're suffering from drought and wildfires, both the results of climate change. Our winters are shorter and floods are more intense.
- c. Studies have shown that mercury burned in China finds its way back to the Inland Northwest faster by the jet stream than it took for the coal to be shipped to China in the first place. We have fish consumption advisories in most of our lakes because when it rains, mercury in the atmosphere falls into our lakes.

| Western down line impacts have not been adequately addressed in this draft EIS and I urge you to choose the No Action Alternative.